

Copyright  
by  
Nicholas Alexander Teale  
2018

**The Thesis Committee for Nicholas Alexander Teale  
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Thesis:**

**Understanding Maritime Conflicts between Turkey and Russia: Merits,  
Limitations, and Alternatives to Realism**

**APPROVED BY  
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

---

Zoltan Barany, Supervisor

---

Samy Ayoub

**Understanding Maritime Conflicts between Turkey and Russia: Merits,  
Limitations, and Alternatives to Realism**

**by**

**Nicholas Alexander Teale**

**Thesis**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Arts**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May 2018**

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I want to thank my parents for their continued support throughout my academic career, as well as all of the teachers and professors who helped me to develop the research and language facilities necessary for the completion and, ideally, the future continuation of this thesis. I also extend my sincerest gratitude to the Institute of International Education for offering me the Boren Fellowship that allowed me to carry out my research on the Caspian Sea, as well as the faculty of ADA University and Azerbaijan University of Languages for providing me with the research facilities and Azerbaijani language training I needed to complete this thesis. Likewise, I extend my deepest appreciation to Drs. Zoltan Barany and Samy Ayoub for agreeing to advise me while abroad, as well as Graduate Coordinator Lisa Parisi and my proxy Leena Warsi for assisting me with the complications associated with completing a thesis abroad. Finally, I want to thank my close friend Allyson Weglar for helping me edit this thesis to be the best that it can possibly be and for inspiring me every day to keep working harder in my graduate studies.

## **Abstract**

# **Understanding Maritime Conflicts between Turkey and Russia: Merits, Limitations, and Alternatives to Realism**

Nicholas Alexander Teale, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

Supervisor: Zoltan Barany

The recent strengthening of ties between Turkey and Russia even amid high-profile diplomatic incidents necessitates a re-evaluation of the United States' diplomatic approach to relations with its NATO ally, Turkey. Analysis of the geopolitical dynamics between Turkey and Russia from a realist perspective provides insight into the factors that have driven Turkish and Russian actions in the past. However, the development of a more predictive model for Turkish and Russian actions requires an understanding of the foreign policy worldviews and historical precedents for conflict and cooperation between the two nations. Due to their strategic importance for imperial and modern Turkey and Russia, the Turkish Straits and Caspian Sea provide valuable insight into this dynamic. By analyzing the geopolitical and legal forces that shaped the legal regimes of these waterways, this thesis will examine the foreign policy strategies of Turkey and Russia, as well as some of the limitations of and alternatives to the realist paradigm of understanding geopolitics.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Hegemony, Sovereignty, and the Turkish Straits System's Legal Regime.....	7
The Legal Regime of the Caspian Sea: Stakes of Turkey and Russia.....	30
The Influence of Self-Perception on Turkish-Russian Relations.....	50
Conclusion.....	73
Bibliography.....	78

## Introduction

Between the Russian annexation of Crimea, the downing of a Russian fighter jet by Turkish armed forces in late 2015, the assassination of the Russian ambassador to Turkey, and the ongoing conflict in Syria, Turkish-Russian relations have gained significant importance in the past few years. Representatives of many American think tanks, as well as the Congressional Research Service, have analyzed the relations of Turkey and Russia from a lens of historical and present geostrategic interests. As members of American institutions, many of the scholars analyzing Turkish-Russian relations do so through the lenses of noted Western geostrategists or international relations thinkers such as Kissinger, Mearsheimer, or Brzezinski. Insofar as think tanks and the CRS serve to influence public policy and aid American policymakers in making the best decisions on geostrategy according to their own interest, this level of analysis serves its purpose.

Yet by using the lenses of Western international relations theory—whether in the liberal, realist, or neoconservative tradition—to understand the shifting dynamics in Turkish-Russian relations, the policy world risks losing insight into the philosophical background of the world leaders responsible for foreign policy decisions in both Turkey and Russia. A true understanding of the motivations and underpinnings of foreign policymaking in these countries requires an understanding of the works of their prominent foreign policy theorists not only as a *sui generis* product but as a discourse with Western intellectual conceptions of international relations. This paper, then, aims to examine the

extent to which American theories of foreign policy can adequately explain developments in relations between Turkey and Russia, as well as to determine what policymakers can learn from examining the way Turks and Russians see themselves in their geopolitical environment.

In order to accomplish this goal, this thesis will examine the history and current status of the waterways disputed and negotiated between Turkey and Russia, as well as the current disputes over their legal regimes. For Turkey, Russia, and the US alike, bodies of water such as the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Turkish Straits form an integral part of geographical identity as well as geopolitics. Turks and Russians have waged historical contests to determine whether the Black Sea would be an Ottoman lake or a Russian lake. The works of Russian political philosopher Aleksandr Dugin divide the world into the people of the land and the people of the sea, declaring the two eternally at war with each other.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the United States, far removed from both countries and separated by two vast oceans, regards a limited presence in the Black Sea as crucial to its interests, in keeping with the strategic tradition of offshore balancing. This strategy, while appropriate for a distant country such as the United States, has less utility for countries such as Turkey, which must develop proactive policy programs such as the current “zero problems with neighbors” policy in order to mitigate threats occurring at its borders.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Dugin develops this concept as the conflict between “thalassocracy,” or “power exercised thanks to the sea,” which is represented by the United States and Europe, and “tellurocracy,” or “power exercised thanks to the land,” which is represented by Eurasia. For more information, see Rénéo Lukic and Michael Brint, eds. *Culture, politics, and nationalism in the age of globalization*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2001, p. 103

<sup>2</sup> This is the critique leveled by Ahmet Davutoglu in *Stratejik Derinlik* against the application of the Western classical realist paradigm, developed by luminaries such as John Mearsheimer, to the foreign policy practice of Turkey.



Ahmet Davutoglu defines the Turkish sphere of influence as extending across four major world seas: the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf may prove a worthy subject of analysis for future studies, particularly given Russian support for Iran, American support for Arabian Peninsula states, and the ongoing conflict in Syria. However, for the sake both of brevity and regional focus, and in keeping with US military focus on the Caucasus and Central Asia as a lynchpin of foreign policy strategy, the present analysis will focus more on the first three bodies of water. Indeed, this analysis can be consolidated even further, as the geostrategic significance of the Black and Eastern Mediterranean Seas to Turkey and Russia hinges on control of one geostrategic chokepoint: the Turkish Straits. The literature on the legal regimes of the Turkish Straits, the Black Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean all have an overwhelming focus on the 1936 Montreux Convention, which accords control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles to Turkey and lays the legal framework for states' passage through them in times of peace and war. Given the emphasis, both locally and internationally, on this one checkpoint, it makes sense to think of the combined Black and Eastern Mediterranean Seas as forming a broader Turkish Straits system.

Having defined these maritime regions, the first chapter of this thesis analyzes the history and current legal regime of the Turkish Straits system, focusing on its status as a site of historic confrontation between Turkey and Russia and examining how its legal regime affects NATO military and securitization interests. This securitization, as well as the circumstances surrounding Turkey's accession to NATO, underscore the validity of the realist lens of international relations in understanding the foreign policy decisions of

Turkey, Russia, and the United States. Using this lens, the first chapter concludes that Turkey's protective actions in this region arise from the historical geopolitical competition over the Turkish Straits as an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea, together with a realist and Ottoman distrust of foreign actors, whether European powers or countries in Turkey's immediate vicinity, such as Russia. This historical experience has influenced the development of Turkey's balanced foreign policy efforts, both with regard to Russia and the United States.

The second chapter concerns the development of the Caspian Sea's legal regime, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although Turkey is not a Caspian littoral state, its close ethno-linguistic and political ties with Azerbaijan, as well as the realization of pipeline projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, TANAP, and TAP give Turkey a significant stake in the Caspian Sea as a key transit country. By proxy, the United States as Turkey's NATO ally and the European Union as the destination for Azerbaijan's petroleum exports via Turkey both have significant stakes in the development of these pipelines. This interest comes to the chagrin of Russia, which views Western interests in the Caspian Sea with suspicion and has worked with its fellow littoral states to ensure the determination of the Caspian's legal status as a transnational lake rather than a sea subject to international law. The securitization efforts of Caspian littoral states and the efforts of NATO countries to influence this securitization also demonstrate the relevance of realist theory in understanding the Caspian Sea's past and present legal regime development.

A realist understanding of military capacity and national interests as the primary determining factor of foreign policy can help us understand how securitization and the use of hard power contribute to the development of Turkish-Russian relations. However, a deeper understanding of the soft power exerted by these two countries and potentially exerted by the US, EU and NATO requires an understanding of how Turkish and Russian leaders and people see themselves and their position in the world, as well as the priorities that result from this self-perception. Thus, the final chapter of this thesis will analyze the philosophies of identity guiding both Turkish and Russian players in international relations and how these philosophies have shaped their views and priorities with regard to foreign policy. Using Graham Allison's model of decision-making to determine the most relevant actors in Turkish and Russian foreign policy, this thesis will determine the identitarian and foreign policy lenses most relevant to each country and examine the repercussions of each for understanding how the United States should conduct its own foreign policy.

Ultimately, this thesis concludes that while the realist lens of foreign policy provides a suitable means of analysis for the pursuit of US interests in the Black and Caspian Seas, as well as the hard power dynamics present between NATO and the CSTO, an understanding of identity's role allows a deeper understanding of potential sites of negotiation and cooperation. Such an understanding will provide insight into the potential future trajectories of Turkish-Russian relations, which have grown steadily closer since the July 15 military coup, and inform the response of the US to this growing rapprochement. The Turkish Straits system poses a historical point of anxiety for Turkey due to protracted Russian interests in seizing control over the Straits, and the Caspian Sea provides Turkey

with an opportunity to develop its status as an energy hub, even at the expense of Russia's gas market, and as a powerful actor in the Turkic world. Thus, this thesis will highlight the ideal areas of cooperation with Turkey and Russia to mitigate potential tension with each other or with other NATO allies in the region.

## **Hegemony, Sovereignty, and the Turkish Straits System's Legal Regime**

As mentioned in the introduction, the prominent neo-Ottoman foreign policy theorist and former Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu defines Ottoman influence as extending across the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, and the Persian Gulf. This thesis will focus on the first three bodies of water, examining the interests and roles of Turkey and Russia in the Caspian Sea in Chapter 2. However, this analysis will consolidate two of the Ottoman Empire's crucial bodies of water into one chapter, since the geostrategic importance of both the Black and Eastern Mediterranean Seas hinges on one key piece of territory, the Turkish Straits. Although ample scholarly analysis exists on Turkey's role in the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, much of this analysis hinges on three unifying factors: securitization in and around the Straits; Russian presence in the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean; and the 1936 Montreux Convention. In view of these similarities, and for the purposes of examining the complex relationship between Turkey and Russia, it makes more sense to consolidate analysis of the Black and Eastern Mediterranean Seas into a single Turkish Straits system.

Despite considerable advances in warship technology and changes in international maritime law over the past 80 years, Turkey continues to define the legal regime of the Turkish Straits primarily in accordance with the Montreux Convention. In the post-Cold War era, this regime, supported at least rhetorically by Vladimir Putin, uses Turkish control of the Straits to uphold a principle of regional determinism in the Black Sea and the

Caucasus, which has disadvantageded NATO's capacity to project hard power in the region. As Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan moves to consolidate power amid European consternation, American projection of soft power in Turkey will prove increasingly important in maintaining present alliances. This thesis will examine the historical conditions leading to the development of the Turkish Straits legal regime in order to assess the Straits' value as a product of—and potential site of diplomatic cooperation in—international diplomacy.

Drawing on academic, journalistic, and official governmental sources, I begin with an overview of Turkish-Russian competition over the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits, starting with the formalization of Turkish-Russian Relations in the late 15th century. I continue with an analysis of Great Power interests in maintaining the stability of the Straits before finally assessing how Turkey's diplomatic and military history from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to World War I informed the beginning of the Turkish Straits legal regime's development in 1923. This analysis will also examine how the Ottoman experience informs modern Turkey's decision-making processes regarding the Straits question. I conclude that Turkey's protective actions toward the Straits arise from a long history of territorial expansionism, a realistic suspicion of international actors, and an eye toward taking advantage of the balance of power to discourage foreign intervention. Subsequently, I examine the impact this history has had on American and international interests in the Turkish Straits and the potential actions that the current administration and global allies of the US could take in order to leverage the issue of the Straits to maintain strong diplomatic ties with Turkey.

This thesis approaches the historical development of the Turkish Straits legal framework from a realist perspective, with the understanding that laws and principles—especially on the anarchical international level—must be substantiated by enforcement and can be undermined by changes in the capacity of any party to enforce relevant statutes. In addition, the legal analysis of the Turkish Straits regime before World War I draws not only on treaties and agreements, but also on international custom, noting that historically these customs have served as precedents for drafting formal legal statutes. Yet the legal principle of *rebus sic stantibus* holds that laws must change along with material facts on the ground, rendering the struggle for legal and customary legitimacy subject to the designs of more powerful interests. This phenomenon manifests in the competing designs of Great Britain and Russia regarding the Straits, as well as the recent ambitions of Bush administration officials to revisit the Montreux Convention, or otherwise to create precedents for provisions of the convention to be breached in state interests.

Throughout history, numerous geopolitical actors have vied for control of the Straits, even before the birth of Christ; Ünlü and Rozakis, for instance, posit that the Trojan War had control of the Straits as its end goal. However, since this thesis aims to examine how history informs present decisions, I have aimed to restrict the analysis to states and actors that remain relevant to modern international relations. Great Britain, France, and Russia were—and remain—dominant forces in European politics with lasting and continued impacts on the Ottoman Empire and contemporary Turkish foreign policy. By contrast, Austria-Hungary and Greece, while playing a significant role in the geopolitics of Eastern Europe and the Straits Question, have since lost much relevance in modern politics

with the breakup of Austria-Hungary and the financial collapse of Greece. While my analysis touches on the role of these countries somewhat, the focus remains on significant present-day actors in the region.

### **Imperial Russian Ambitions in the Turkish Straits**

The first period of Turkish Straits history, as defined by Nihan Ünlü, revolved around the progressive interstate geopolitical struggle for control of the Turkish Straits, out of which the Ottoman Empire emerged as the victor in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> By the time Ottoman-Russian relations began in 1492, the Ottoman Empire had wrested control of the Straits away from Rome, which in turn had seized the Straits from the Greeks. Indeed, the newly developing relationship between Turkey and Russia began as a geopolitical struggle over several key geostrategic regions. These regions included the Crimean Khanate, a territory which, after a period of control by the Mongol Golden Horde, became an Ottoman vassal state in 1475.<sup>4</sup> Also among these geostrategic sites of interest, and more germane to the present study, were the Black Sea, the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and the Sea of Marmara.

The Russo-Ottoman struggle for geopolitical influence in the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits took place against a greater backdrop of regional and European territorial

---

<sup>3</sup> Nihan Ünlü, "The Legal Regime of the Turkish Straits," in *International Straits of the World*, ed. Gerard J. Mangone, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2002, p. 7

<sup>4</sup> S.F. Oreshkova and N.Y. Ulchenko, *Rossiya i Turtsiya: Problemy Formirovaniya Granits* [Russia and Turkey: Problems of Border Formation], Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences Oriental Institute, 1999, p. 2



and religious campaigns. Although European voyages of discovery to the West caused the Turkish Straits to lose much of their commercial and geostrategic relevance to European powers by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the role of the Straits in uniting two waterways—the Black and Mediterranean Seas—and in providing routes of communication would continue to make the Straits a point of contention across Europe.<sup>5</sup> Tsarist Russia in particular had an eye toward territorial acquisition in the Turkish Straits and the Black Sea. The ice that formed during the winter months rendered the Baltic Sea unnavigable for much of the year; as a result, Russia sought access to the Black Sea and the Straits as an alternate sea route to the Mediterranean during those months.

In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Russo-Turkish War of 1686-1700 led to Peter the Great's capture of nearby Azov and the establishment of a Russian presence in the Crimean Peninsula,<sup>6</sup> a conquest legally formalized in 1700 by the Treaty of Constantinople.<sup>7</sup> Ottoman control of the Kerch Strait continued to preclude Russian access to the Black Sea; however, Catherine the Great managed to obtain access after a series of territorial conflicts with the Ottomans between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>8</sup> The Turkish-Russian War in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century resulted in an Ottoman defeat south of the Danube, leading to the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774. This treaty gave Russia merchant access to the Turkish Straits; Russia also gained recognition as a Black Sea power following its annexation of the Crimean Khanate in 1783. However, Russia continued to

---

<sup>5</sup> Christos Rozakis and Petros Stagos, "The Turkish Straits," in *International Straits of the World*, ed. Gerard J. Mangone, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987, p. 14

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17

<sup>7</sup> "Treaty of Constantinople (1700)" in *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, ed. Alexander Mikaberidze, 250.

<sup>8</sup> Ünlü, "The Legal Regime of the Turkish Straits," p. 10

seek direct control over the Turkish Straits, and to this end partnered with Austria in another campaign against Turkey in 1789, though Austria would withdraw from this campaign in 1791. Wary of Russian expansionism, Great Britain, Holland, and Prussia intervened to repel Russian advances, resulting in the signature of the Treaty of Jassy.<sup>9</sup> While this treaty confirmed the gains made by Russia in the Crimean Khanate, as well as all the gains formalized by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, the coveted Turkish Straits remained under Ottoman administration.

This intervention would not mark the first time—nor the last—that Western European powers took interest in guarding Ottoman sovereignty and control of the Straits against Russian expansionism. Nearly a century prior, three years after the Russian conquest of Azov, both Britain and France supported the Ottoman Empire’s denial of Russia’s request to pass warships through the Straits. As a general principle, Britain sought to avoid the development of sovereignty in the Aegean and Black Sea regions in order to facilitate the navigation of trade routes to India. Thus, in an effort to contain the expansionist ambitions of other empires in the region, Britain supported the “sick man of Europe” as controller of the Straits over more ambitious countries such as Russia. Austria-Hungary would assume a similar policy of convenience with the Ottoman Empire due to its opposition of a strong Greece, while France had interests in protecting Catholic populations within the Empire.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 21

<sup>10</sup> Rozakis and Stagos, 18

Nor would Russia be the sole aggressor seeking control of the Turkish Straits as Europe entered the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the experience of Russian aggression only a quarter of a century prior, the Sultan and the Tsar signed an agreement formed in 1798 and renewed in 1805 which allowed Russian warships to pass through the Straits and established the Ottoman Empire's responsibility for passage by both Russia and other international powers. The Sultan concluded this agreement largely due to fear of aggression from Napoleonic France to the west, which at the time had designs to conquer Egypt, a plan foiled by the joint intervention of Britain and Turkey. Napoleon himself likewise recognized the geopolitical value of keeping the Straits under Turkish control, as he, like Britain, feared that Russian control of the area could facilitate Tsarist expansionism.<sup>11</sup> To that end, despite having terminated the long-standing alliance between France and the Ottoman Empire through expansionism into the Middle East and North Africa, in 1806 Napoleon sent to the Empire his envoy Horace Sebastiani, who successfully—if briefly—managed to convince the Porte to keep the Straits open to French warships.<sup>12</sup>

To the end of keeping the Straits under Ottoman control, the British signed the Treaty of the Dardanelles with the Sultan in 1809. For 300 years, the closure of the Turkish Straits to foreign warships was enshrined in international customs, only breached by the aforementioned special agreements with Russia and France in time of war. The Treaty of the Dardanelles would formalize this custom in a legal statute, enabling the passage of merchant ships—which particular privilege to British naval vessels—while barring the

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 22

<sup>12</sup> Efraim and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: the Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789-1923*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 11-12

passage of warships through the Straits.<sup>13</sup> This treaty would also lead to the 1841 London Straits Convention, which overrode the access privileges granted to Russia in the 1833 Hünkâr-İskelesi Treaty and enshrined the universal recognition among the European powers of the Straits' openness to commerce, as well as their closure during wartime, except at the discretion of the Porte.<sup>14</sup>

Here we see the development of the principles that would guide the Turkish and global understanding of the Turkish Straits' importance in the years to come, especially after World War I. Recognizing the value of the Straits as a means of communication and commerce for the European powers, as well as the vulnerability resulting from the possession of such valuable real estate, the Ottoman Empire sought to maintain its position in the Straits via diplomacy and alliances within the web of European powers. This diplomatic approach would lead to the recognition of the Straits' openness to commerce and closure to military vessels not allied with the Sultan, two tenets of the Turkish Straits legal regime that would be further formalized in Lausanne and Montreux.

However, these developments cast Ottoman diplomacy, legality, and sovereignty over the Turkish Straits as arising from a place of diplomacy, foreign protectionism, and Great Power interests rather than the military capacities of the Ottoman Empire, a status that would be solidified through the Black Sea Conference of 1871. Despite the professed resolve of the Great Powers to respect and uphold Ottoman territorial integrity in accordance with the 1856 Treaty of Paris, the Ottoman Empire had suffered heavy material

---

<sup>13</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Treaty of Çanak," Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998. Accessed April 29, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Canak>

<sup>14</sup> Rozakis and Stagos, 24-25.

losses by that time, placing the Porte in a debilitated bargaining position. Kostaki Musurus Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador to London, wrote a letter to Ali Pasha lamenting this position, noting that “our friends have become accustomed to expect everything from us without giving us anything in return.”<sup>15</sup> The expected passivity of the Ottoman Empire had evidence in the initial aims of the British to preserve the “status quo” in the Straits irrespective of Ottoman interests in maintaining sovereignty and the right to open or close the Straits to allies in wartime. Ultimately, Italy produced a compromise acceptable to the Porte, saying that the Sultan could open or close the Straits in accordance with the 1856 Treaty of Paris rather than the “interests and security of the empire.”<sup>16</sup>

Yet the ability of the Ottoman Empire to adhere to this treaty would rely on the Porte’s military capacity to defend its territory, a capacity that the Russian tsar and his Foreign Minister Sazonov sought to undermine at every turn during World War I. Throughout the war, Russia courted Britain and France to curry favor for support of Russia acquiring the Turkish Straits and Istanbul pending an Entente victory. In this war, the Ottoman Empire’s lack of agency and inability to defend the Straits militarily became readily apparent, as the Porte largely maintained control of the Straits as a result of diplomatic intrigue between Russia, Great Britain, and France, as well as the incapacity and limited development of the Russian navy. Bobroff makes the argument that despite the academic consensus on the success of Sazonov’s push for control of the Straits, Sazonov’s emphasis on acquiring this territory would prove a fatal mistake, since it alienated

---

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870-1887*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973, p. 51

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 56

Moscow's allies, especially France.<sup>17</sup> In this way, the Ottoman Empire managed to fend off Russian advances; however, this victory would prove pyrrhic after the Entente victory and the implementation of British and French designs to divide the Empire's territories.

### **The Turkish Straits Legal Regime from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic**

If the events of the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries and World War I have informed Turkish protection of the Straits as a matter of sovereignty and realist diplomacy with the Great Powers of Europe, the first years of the Turkish Republic reveal the significance of the Turkish Straits as a symbol of modern Turkey's emergence from the disaster of World War I. As shown in the previous section, prior to 1914 the Ottoman Empire benefited from its international perception as the "sick man of Europe" and the interest of larger powers such as Great Britain in having the Straits controlled by a weaker state rather than a stronger one. However, this strategy could only last so long, and despite its best efforts to resist occupation of and disarmament in the Dardanelles, the Ottoman Empire would ultimately lose the Turkish Straits to a joint military operation by Britain and India.<sup>18</sup> For the newly founded Turkish Republic to regain control of the Straits and its lost territories, its leaders would have to take military initiative to retake the Straits and govern them from a position of military strength rather than international diplomacy.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ronald Park Bobroff, *Late Imperial Russia and the Turkish Straits: Roads to Glory*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2006, pp. 152-153

<sup>18</sup> A.L. MacFie, "The Straits Question in the First World War, 1914-1918," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 19, January 1983, pp. 43-74

In the years from 1918 to 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk would undertake to accomplish this very goal. Through a series of military victories in the Turkish War of Independence (1918-1922), the National Movement continued to push for the reclamation (or “liberation” in official parlance) of the Dardanelles and even Thrace, to the growing alarm of Britain.<sup>19</sup> The military advances of the *milli mücadele* even won the admiration of Turkey’s perennial rival Russia, which—now under the administration of the Soviet Union—sent a letter congratulating Turkey on its defeat of Greek forces and, by extension, the impositions of European imperialism.<sup>20</sup> Turkish reassertion of military strength and a newfound strategic partnership with Russia placed Atatürk and his foreign minister İnönü in a stronger position, enabling Turkey to enter into the negotiations that would produce the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

Former Turkish ambassador Kemal Girgin describes this period of conquest as the *Büyük Zafer*, or “great victory,” highlighting Turkish pride—both officially and nationally—in these conquests, which led to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 and the Montreux Convention in 1936.<sup>21</sup> Baskın Oran describes the first of these documents, the Treaty of Lausanne, as “a treaty signed by equals,” the first of its kind since World War I; indeed, as the previous section demonstrates, much of the legal framework governing the Straits and the Empire’s territories more broadly prior to World War I saw the Ottoman

---

<sup>19</sup> Kemal Girgin, *Ruslarla Kavgadan-Derin Ortaklığa (Son Yüz Senemiz: 1914-2014)* [From Conflict to Cooperation with the Russians (The Last Hundred Years: 1914-2014)], Istanbul: İlgi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2014, pp. 239-240

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 240-242

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Empire negotiating from a position of weakness.<sup>22</sup> This new treaty solidified the new borders of the Republic of Turkey, primarily in accordance with military gains, and recognized the Republic of Turkey's sovereignty over the Turkish Straits, with many of the protections and rights previously ascribed to the Ottoman Empire left intact. While the Straits would remain open for merchant ships in time of peace, the Treaty of Lausanne gave Turkey control over entry of both merchant and military vessels in time of war as a matter of national security. However, the treaty also demilitarized certain areas of the Straits region, a matter which—as Atatürk noticed—posed issues of political realism for the Turkish government and military.

Oran notes that Turkey accepted these restrictions on its sovereignty reluctantly, in the hopes that naval disarmament measures being taken alongside the negotiation of the Treaty of Lausanne would contribute to greater regional security overall. However, the successes of the 1921-1922 Washington Naval Disarmament Conference and the London Conference of 1930, both of which limited the tonnage of military vessels, could not stop the naval arms race; by 1934 the rise of Nazism had also compelled Germany to withdraw from disarmament talks.<sup>23</sup> Against this backdrop, Turkish diplomats in the early 1930s urged the parties to the Lausanne Straits Convention to re-examine the provisions of the treaty that called for disarmament of parts of the Straits. In 1936, based on the international legal principle of *rebus sic stantibus*, Turkey's petition for a re-examination of this clause

---

<sup>22</sup> Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919-2006: Facts and Analyses with Documents*, Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2010, pp. 126-140

<sup>23</sup> Oran, 224



began to gain favor among an international community increasingly troubled by the rise of Nazism and Italian fascism.

Thus, in the Montreux Conference of 1936, Turkey “was returned all that it had lost in Lausanne and its sovereignty and control over the Straits was restored.”<sup>24</sup> The legality of militarizing the Straits allowed for defense of the sovereignty granted to Turkey, which—as the events of World War II would show—remained fragile and susceptible to expansionist interests. The participants in this conference affirmed the Montreux Convention as crucial to the security of both Turkey and the other Black Sea States. This consideration of the Straits Question within the broader framework of Black Sea security speaks to the regional power and influence that Turkey gained via the international legal recognition of its sovereignty over the Turkish Straits.

Despite the development of a legal regime favorable to Turkish sovereignty and national security in the Straits, Turkey remained concerned about realpolitik and the potential for power shifts to undo its territorial gains. This realist concern continues to the present day, as Ahmet Davutoğlu notes the problem of armament in the Aegean Islands and the challenges posed thereby to Turkish control of the Straits.<sup>25</sup> Azerbaijani academic Jamil Hasanlı notes that even a few years after Russia signed the Montreux Convention with Turkey and the European powers, Stalin held designs to acquire the Turkish Straits by force, or to pressure Turkey to renegotiate the Montreux Convention. For example, amid negotiations with Germany for Axis membership, Stalin addressed Comintern Executive

---

<sup>24</sup> Jamil Hasanlı, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis of the Cold War, 1945-1953*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011, p. xii

<sup>25</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik* [Strategic Depth], Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001, p. 123

Committee Secretary-General Georgi Dmitrov on November 25, 1940 to lay out a plan for negotiation strategies, which included the demand “that the Germans uphold Soviet interests in Turkey.”<sup>26</sup> Soviet interests in rewriting the Montreux Convention to privilege other Black Sea countries at the expense of Turkey continued throughout World War II, with Stalin aiming to convince Britain and France of his position and the need to re-evaluate the convention heading into the 1944 Yalta Conference.<sup>27</sup> In light of this position and the similar position taken by the Soviets at Potsdam, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, a journalist for Turkish newspaper *Tanin*, wrote as follows:

“We are astonished that the most serious British newspaper cannot realize the gist of the Straits problem and Russian claims on the issue. Europeans and Americans think that the Russians want the Straits to be free... No! Russians do not want the opening of the Straits; they want the closing of the Straits! They want the Straits to be closed and opened to comply with Russian interests. They do not want control over the Straits by Europeans or Americans, i.e. their enemies. They want to use the Straits as a base for their aggressive intentions.”<sup>28</sup>

These Soviet ambitions would come to a head during the Soviet War of Nerves against Turkey from 1945 to 1953, which saw the development of the Turkish Crisis and the accession of Turkey to NATO. Both Stalin and Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov sought to expand their influence by pressuring Turkey to accept Russian military bases in the Straits, a development which—given the size and resource disparities between Russia and Turkey—would create a serious asymmetry of power that would threaten Turkish sovereignty in the Straits.<sup>29</sup> Among the Soviet arguments for renegotiating the convention

---

<sup>26</sup> Hasanlı, 10

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 32-36

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 102

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 84-87

was the participation of Japan, which no longer had relevance to the convention due to its decimated economic and political situation; however, Stalin sought to use this anachronism to push for further changes to the status quo. This initiative led to several Soviet military attempts to seize control of the Straits, concurrent with efforts to gain footing in the Caucasus and leverage territorial claims from Soviet Georgia and Armenia to pressure Turkey for more concessions.<sup>30</sup> By 1951, Turkey was seeking aid from and accession to NATO in order to combat threats of a possible Soviet attack; on the recommendation of the CIA, both Turkey and Greece gained this status on October 15, 1951.

### **Implications for Foreign Policy**

The writings of chief officials in the Turkish government of recent years confirm the Republic's perceived need to project both hard and soft power in the nation, taking an active role in regional politics rather than acting as a passive onlooker. To the end of maintaining a stable diplomatic situation, Ahmet Davutoğlu—who has served as both Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs under Erdoğan—lays out a vision of a Turkey that relies on its ties with Islamic countries to project soft power and diplomatic influence in his book *Stratejik Derinlik*. Even prior to Davutoğlu's vision of Islamic liberalism, former Turkish President (1989-1993) and leader of the center-right Anavatan (Motherland) Party criticized the country's foreign policy establishment for pursuing a

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 365-367

passive foreign policy more similar to İnönü than Atatürk, to which end he would establish the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Özal elaborates:

“Their basic principle is this: do not meddle in the affairs of others! According to the foreign ministry, it is necessary to observe the environment before deciding on a policy course. They consider it a success to [follow] the middle way of what others have been doing. They consider it prudent to follow the lead of others. They are the followers of İsmet İnönü who sought to maintain the status quo... Everyone talks about Atatürkism and praise[s] Atatürk. Yet the bureaucracy follows the line of İnönü and never that of Atatürk. The military, civilian, domestic and foreign affairs, the entire Turkish bureaucracy follows the line of İnönü.”<sup>31</sup>

The rise of the United Nations and the enshrinement of formal international recognition of states into law has not entirely mitigated the geopolitical power struggle that shaped the legal regime of the Turkish Straits, even if incidents such as Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea have become more an exception than a rule. Moreover, the Turkish Straits remain important in the present day for political reasons, as petroleum is shipped from Caspian Sea gas fields through the Turkish Straits to reach the Mediterranean.<sup>32</sup> According to the US Congressional Research Service, “[t]he Foreign Ministry notes that Turkey is geographically close to 72% of the world proven gas and 73% of its oil reserves in the Middle East and Caspian Basin.”<sup>33</sup>

In particular, the US, Turkey, and NATO allies have invested significantly in the flow of oil from Azerbaijan to two Turkish cities—Ceyhan on the Mediterranean and

---

<sup>31</sup> Hasan Köşebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p. 123

<sup>32</sup> Ronald Park Bobroff, *Late Imperial Russia and the Turkish Straits: Roads to Glory*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2006, p. 1

<sup>33</sup> Carol Migdalovitz, “Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and US Views,” *Congressional Research Service*, November 28, 2010, p. 39

Erzurum on the Black Sea—via pipelines running through Tbilisi.<sup>34</sup> Geographically, the Ceyhan pipeline directly bypasses the Straits to access the Mediterranean Sea, while the gas from the Erzurum pipeline must pass through the Black Sea or over land to reach its final destination. However, another pipeline currently in construction—known as the Nabucco West or Turkey-Austria pipeline—would link Erzurum to markets in Europe, allowing the Erzurum pipeline to bypass the Straits as well. Such a development could grant NATO ally Turkey significantly more mobility for energy transit than neighbor and rival Russia, since—as Migdalovitz writes—the latter must still rely on the Turkish Straits as a conduit to the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>35</sup> Russia appears to have taken notice of this potential threat to its energy hegemony, having voiced strong opposition to the project.<sup>36</sup>

This proximity to key energy reserves further highlights the significance of present geopolitical conflicts in Turkey’s neighborhood, including ongoing wars in the Middle East, the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, and the tensions in Georgia over the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Here, too, Turkey’s protection of the Straits and distrust of American unilateral interventionism in regional affairs, both backed by popular support, have created problems for the fulfillment of US policy goals, as exemplified in the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, sparked by Georgian attempts to reassert control of the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. Despite the clear and present threats posed by this conflict to Turkey’s security and

---

<sup>34</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins and Jeffrey Mankoff, “Turkey, Russia, and Iran in the Caucasus,” in *The Turkey, Russia, Iran Nexus: Evolving Power Dynamics in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia*, ed. Samuel J. Brannen, Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013, p. 19

<sup>35</sup> Migdalovitz, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Stylianos A. Sotiriou, *Russian Energy Strategy in the European Union, the Former Soviet Union Region, and China*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015, pp. 61-62

economic interests—particularly considering Tbilisi’s status as a hub for present and planned pipeline projects—Erdoğan sought to remain neutral in accordance with his “zero problems with neighbors” policy, as well as to maintain the growing economic ties between Russia and Turkey. This development speaks to the aforementioned role of the Montreux Convention in enabling Turkey to exert greater regional influence in the Black Sea area and over peripheral countries such as Azerbaijan.

Erdoğan therefore rejected the Bush administration’s proposal to send warships large enough to violate the Montreux Convention through the Turkish Straits, and signaled to Washington that Turkey “would not be a willing participant in a policy of confrontation with its important neighbor.”<sup>37</sup> This strict adherence to the Turkish Straits legal regime signaled a distrust of foreign intervention later echoed by Turkey’s close ally Azerbaijan, whose Prime Minister greeted Vice President Dick Cheney, who had arrived to discuss plans for the Nabucco pipeline project, with a cold reception in Baku. Moscow applauded these efforts against American action in the Caucasus and urged Turkey—a growing ally both at the time and in the present day, despite Turkey’s attack of a Russian fighter jet in 2015—to continue resisting American pressure to renegotiate the Montreux Convention.<sup>38</sup> Turkey’s resistance to sacrificing sovereignty and military agency for the sake of expediency has precedent dating back to the formation of NATO and Turkey’s accession

---

<sup>37</sup> Bulent Aliriza, “Turkey and the Crisis in the Caucasus,” *CSIS Commentary*, September 9, 2008, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/turkey-and-crisis-caucasus>

<sup>38</sup> M. K. Bhadrakumar, “Russia and Turkey tango in the Black Sea,” *Asia Times Online*, 12 September 2008, <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?144306-Russia-And-Turkey-Tango-In-The-Black-Sea>

in 1952: while not expressly opposed to integration, Turkey would insist on its chief of staff retaining control over its armed forces.<sup>39</sup>

In the wake of the April 16 referendum on granting Erdoğan's ambitions for sweeping constitutional reform, as well as the political posturing undertaken by Erdoğan against European countries and the leader's rapprochement with Russia, the Turkish Straits could serve as a potential site of leverage to maintain strong relations with Turkey.<sup>40</sup> Given Moscow's present encouragement of and support for Turkey to maintain the statutes of the Montreux Convention against American pressure, a significant push by the US to renegotiate the convention—even if, as Ünlü suggests, the convention is anachronistic and overdue for revisitation—risks pushing Turkey closer to Moscow's sphere of influence. Indeed, the history of Russian engagement in the Turkish Straits from 1945 to 1953 might reasonably give Turkey pause on the idea of renegotiating the convention based on an anachronism.

## Conclusions

Historical analysis shows that the development of the present-day Turkish Straits legal regime can be understood to a significant degree as a matter of geopolitical pragmatism and *realpolitik*. Rulers from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic have

---

<sup>39</sup> Ferenc A. Váli, *The Turkish Straits and NATO*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972, p. 84-85.

<sup>40</sup> For examples of Erdoğan's belligerence in Europe, see *BBC News*, "Turkey's Erdogan calls Dutch authorities 'Nazi remnants,'" March 11, 2017. Regarding the Turkish constitutional referendum, see *BBC News*, "Turkey referendum: Erdogan hails 'clear' win in vote on new powers," April 16, 2017. Finally, Jeremy Mankoff writes with a critical eye toward the ramifications of the recent Turkey-Russia rapprochement in "Russia and Turkey's Rapprochement," *Foreign Affairs*, July 20, 2016.

understood the economic advantage and vulnerability to invasion and military campaigns that come with control of the Straits. At its peak, the Ottoman Empire had an ample buffer of land to protect from foreign invasion, enabling the Sultan to assert control over the Black Sea as an Ottoman lake. Although this influence diminished with territorial losses to Russia and European powers over several centuries, the Ottoman Empire managed to maintain its control of the Turkish Straits by playing competing power interests off of each other; the conception of Straits law as a system open to merchant passage and closed to military vessels not aligned with the Sultan became formally enshrined in legal statutes during this period. However, the events of World War I and the strategic, realpolitik interests of both the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance would spell the end of the Ottoman Empire's diplomatic mediation of the Straits.

As the Turkish Republic formed, Atatürk's military campaigns to reclaim lands lost during World War I enabled the Republic to uphold both the Treaty of Lausanne and the Montreux Convention from a position of strength as well as diplomacy. However, realist concerns regarding the Turkish Straits would continue to arise throughout World War II, particularly due to the Soviet expansionism that would culminate in the 1946 Turkish Straits crisis. This state of affairs has led to the accession of Turkey to NATO and the solidification of Turkey as a key ally of the US. However, as this analysis shows, Turkey remains highly protective of its position in the Turkish Straits, maintaining a military presence in the Straits—albeit one that Váli describes as symbolic—and working actively to uphold the Straits legal regime from a position of military dominance and strength rather



than reliance on foreign protectionism.<sup>41</sup> Given Erdoğan's recent denunciations of European leaders, the controversy over EU membership and the German refugee deal, and Turkey's growing economic cooperation and rapprochement with Russia, the Straits' economic, political, and symbolic significance to Turkey highlights numerous options for US leverage to maintain strong ties with a rapidly changing nation.

### **Limitations, Avenues for Future Research, and Connections with Present Research**

The history of Great Power competition and conflict in the Turkish Straits has been documented extensively in academic literature, which allows for a high degree of confidence in this thesis; however, this analysis will benefit greatly from additional archival or other primary sources, such as many of the works cited in this thesis draw upon. While the present thesis' analysis allows for an understanding of the geopolitical forces that shaped the regime of the Turkish Straits, a deeper understanding of these historical events in the Turkish context necessitates an analysis of important actors in Turkish foreign policy and the role of their philosophies, such as neo-Ottomanism, in shaping an understanding of past events and future goals. This subject will be analyzed in the third chapter of this thesis, which will examine the broad theoretical lenses of both neo-Ottomanism and neo-Eurasianism to determine the impact of each on the decision-making

---

<sup>41</sup> In pages 88-89 of his book *The Turkish Straits and NATO*, Váli quotes the claim of American military writer Hanson W. Baldwin that "Turkey's strength is not equal to her importance," and that "Turkish pride rather than pragmatic strategy dictates the maintenance of large forces in European Turkey."

process in foreign policy and provide insight into the ideal approach to conducting US diplomacy with Turkey and Russia.

The backdrop of geopolitical competition and conflict against which the Straits Question arises also has a significant religious dimension. Moscow, for instance, collaborated with Pope Nicholas V to wage military campaigns against Istanbul and restore the city of Constantinople, in accordance with the Pope's ecumenical ambitions of a unified Church. Similarly, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca's provisions gave Russia permission to expand the Church into the Ottoman Empire and granted Moscow protector status over the empire's Eastern Orthodox community.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Moscow sought to expand this protector status into the newly emerging Balkan States, which Russia saw as "the antechamber to the Turkish Straits."<sup>43</sup> Considering the extent to which religious interests financed and interconnected with state interests in imperial European politics, as well as the focus of this thesis on international relations and foreign policy rather than religion, I have opted not to include this religious component within the scope of this analysis.

However, given the rise of neo-Ottomanism, the Islamic liberalism espoused by the AKP, the persistence of Christian communities in Turkey, and Erdoğan's recent denunciations of Islamophobic leaders in Europe, the subject of religion may prove fertile for future research.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, conceptions of Moscow as an outward-looking "castle" city holding the mantle of the Orthodox "Third Rome," as some academics and Russian

---

<sup>42</sup> Rozakis and Stagos, 17

<sup>43</sup> Bobroff, 3

<sup>44</sup> The definition of the AKP as a party of Islamic liberalism is posited by Hasan Köşebalaban in *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* (2011), and theoretically defined largely by the work of academic and former Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, particularly *Stratejik Derinlik* (2001).

writers have suggested, have played significant roles in the discourse between Westernization and Slavophilia since the mid-17th century with the schism (*raskol*) in the Russian Church.<sup>45</sup> The third chapter of this thesis will analyze the role of this discourse in shaping Russian foreign policy, although with more of a focus on the Orthodox Church as a figure within a broader Russian and Slavic identity.

Finally, while this analysis has focused on the legal regime surrounding the Turkish Straits, a comprehensive understanding of the Straits' present legal framework will benefit from an analysis of the legal regimes governing other bodies of water which interact with the Straits in economic trade and cooperation. The aforementioned concerns of Russia over the BTC pipeline as an "unwarranted curtailment of [its] natural rights in the South Caucasus" highlight the ever-present importance of oil supply, as well as the international legal framework and customs governing its transit, in determining economic and political influence.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the critical importance of Azerbaijan as a US and Turkish ally and the country's access to Caspian Sea oil fields necessitate an understanding of how the Caspian, Mediterranean, and Black Sea legal regimes interact with the Turkish Straits legal regime. The development of the Caspian Sea legal regime—which remains a contentious process to this day—and the ramifications of this development for Turkish-Russian relations will be analyzed in the following chapter.

---

<sup>45</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, "The Russian National Myth Repudiated," in *Myths and Nationhood*, ed. George Schopflin and Geoffrey Hosking, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 199

<sup>46</sup> Cornell and Starr, 9

## **The Legal Regime of the Caspian Sea: Stakes of Turkey and Russia**

The Caspian Sea lies at the center of an ongoing debate between five countries, including Russia, over its legal status and the military enforcement thereof. Turkey has cooperated with one of these countries, Azerbaijan, to develop two pipelines passing from Baku to Turkey via Tbilisi, and has a vested interest in the Caspian Sea's legal regime for the further development of Azerbaijan's Southern Gas Corridor. However, Russia, which views NATO action in the Caspian Sea with considerable skepticism, has taken a strong stance against NATO military involvement in the region and threatened military action against projects currently in development. Beginning with an analysis of the legal history of the Caspian Sea and the motives of strategic actors in the region, this thesis will establish the hegemony of geostrategic relations and military capacity in determining the Caspian legal regime. Bearing this framework in mind, this thesis will proceed to analyze the strategic positions and capabilities of Turkey and Russia in the Caspian Sea in order to determine potential ramifications for their bilateral relations.

### **Theoretical Background, Scope and Relevant Actors**

This thesis analyzes the Caspian legal regime from a realist perspective, with the understanding that legal agreements between two or more countries arise from international power dynamics and may be revised by changes in the international order. The relevance of this paradigm will become apparent upon examination of the Caspian legal regime's history, throughout which legal agreements signed between Iran and the USSR or its successor states have failed to enter into force or led to one state's unilateral domination.

The continued buildup of naval forces in the littoral states also indicates an ever-present interest in legal revisionism, as well as mistrust of other littoral states and foreign involvement.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, in the absence of a new, formalized legal agreement between Iran and the USSR's successor states, Bahman Diba argues in favor of operating as though the previous legal regime created with the USSR were still in force.<sup>48</sup>

Other scholars, such as Barbara Janusz-Pawletta, take an internationalist approach to understanding the development of the Caspian Sea legal regime, stressing the security and ecological urgency of creating a formalized legal regime drawing on norms established by documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.<sup>49</sup> Janusz-Pawletta's approach to understanding the Caspian legal regime focuses mostly on the urgency of developing a commonly accepted Caspian legal framework to settle disputes and achieve long-term environmental protection. However, the implementation and enshrinement of international legal norms in the Caspian legal regime presupposes the acceptance of this paradigm as legitimate by the littoral states. Excluding Kazakhstan, which has drawn on international legal frameworks and precedents to propose a "modified middle line" model for Caspian Sea division that would also enable Kazakh access to the Volga River, none of the littoral states accept international law as an acceptable framework

---

<sup>47</sup> Catherine Putz examines this phenomenon in her article "Yes, Kazakhstan has a Navy," published April 14, 2015 in *The Diplomat*, examining the buildup of Kazakh naval forces in the Caspian. This article in turn cites Joshua Kucera's "The Great Caspian Arms Race," published June 22, 2012 in *Foreign Policy* magazine, which, in addition to naval buildup and oil-related diplomatic crises between littoral states (i.e. the 2001 Alborz incident between Iran and Azerbaijan and a similar dispute in 2009), details US interests in the region and Western efforts to increase military presence and alliances.

<sup>48</sup> Bahman Diba, *The Law and Politics of the Caspian Sea in the 21st Century*, Bethesda: IBEX Publishers, 2003, p. 109

<sup>49</sup> Barbara Janusz-Pawletta, *The Legal Status of the Caspian Sea: Current Challenges and Prospects for Future Development*, Berlin: Springer, 2015, p. 33.

for governing the Caspian region.<sup>50</sup> In fact, Russia and Iran, with the support and occasionally the coercion of both littoral and non-littoral states, have led efforts to keep NATO out of the Caspian region and to keep determination of the Caspian's legal status, with all the power entailed thereby, between the littoral states.<sup>51</sup>

In any case, the bulk of Janusz-Pawletta's book, which provides a wealth of details on the formation and controversies of the Caspian legal status and regime, focuses the bulk of its investigation on environmental issues. This present thesis focuses on the Caspian legal regime's implications for Turkish-Russian relations, particularly concerning the construction of energy pipelines, Turkish involvement with NATO, and the potential for conflict arising from Turkey's close relationship to Azerbaijan and its friction with the historical alignment of Russia and Iran with Armenia. Since Turkey is not a Caspian littoral state and therefore neither bound by nor party to the agreements concluded regarding the use of the sea, issues such as navigation, environmental protection, and use of living resources such as the sturgeon population fall beyond the scope of this analysis. However, as Janusz-Pawletta demonstrates, they represent critical fields of analysis for future research.

Due to this focus on areas of potential conflict between Turkey and Russia, this thesis considers the Turkish and Russian states as the primary relevant actors and units of analysis. Additionally, given the ongoing contestation of the Caspian Sea's legal regime, the Caspian littoral states play an important role in determining the capacity of Turkey and

---

<sup>50</sup> Diba, 48-52

<sup>51</sup> Jacopo Dettoni, "Russia and Iran Lock NATO Out of Caspian Sea," *The Diplomat*, October 1, 2014

Russia to act in their interests. Turkey's status as a NATO member and long-standing US interests in Caspian oil development and containment of Russian and Iranian influence render the US a relevant actor in this field. Finally, the stakes of national and multinational oil corporations in the Southern Gas Corridor and other Caspian pipeline projects merit analysis based on corporate interests and the interests of the companies' respective states. Figure 1 shows the division of shares in the projects proposed via the so-called "Contract of the Century" in 1994.<sup>52</sup>

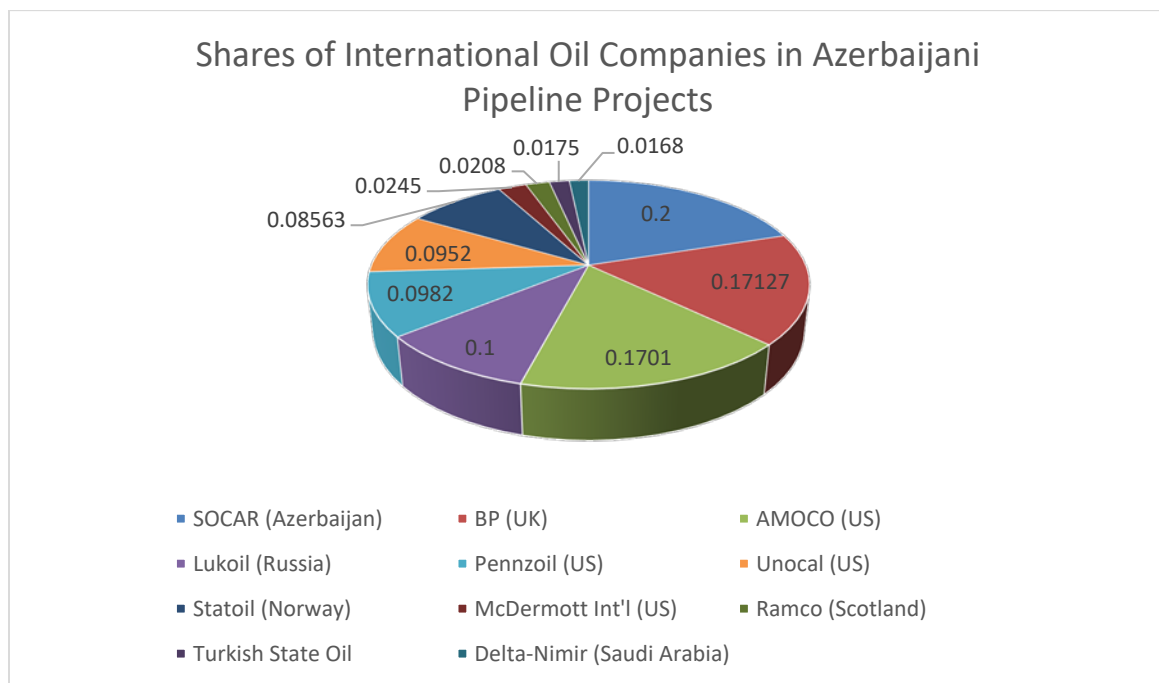


Figure 1

<sup>52</sup> Nasser Sagheb and Masoud Javadi, "Azerbaijan's 'Contract of the Century' Finally Signed with Western Oil Consortium," *Azerbaijan International*, Winter 1994, pp. 26-28, 65

## History of the Caspian Legal Regime: Pre-1990

Upon creating Russia's Caspian Flotilla in 1722, Peter the Great remarked: "Our interests will never allow any other nation to claim the Caspian Sea," a quote now memorialized in a plaque at the flotilla's headquarters. For most of its history, Russia fulfilled this pledge, maintaining its dominance in the Caspian Sea through conquests and victories over neighboring Persia. In the 1723 Treaty of St. Petersburg, Persia surrendered the territories of Derbent, Mazandaran, Astarabad and Baku to Russia, thus establishing Russia's *de facto* hegemony over the Caspian. Although the signature of the Treaty of Rasht (1729) returned some of these lands and granted Persia access to the Caspian Sea, the subsequent treaties of Golestan (1813) and Turkamanchai (1828), emblematic of Persia's military losses to Russia, granted Russia the exclusive rights to maintain a naval presence in the Caspian.<sup>53</sup>

During the time of the Tsars, Russia advanced the concept of a "closed sea" to describe the regime of the Caspian and Black Seas. This concept entailed the creation of ten-mile exclusive economic zones (EEZ) off the borders of the two littoral states and governing the inner portion of the Caspian Sea in accordance with international governance norms for the "high sea": that is, merchant ships could pass freely and dock with no restrictions. In fact, over a century later the Soviet Union called for the enshrinement of this principle in the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Law of the Sea, a proposal rejected by the United States, Great Britain, and other powers due to its potential restrictiveness on

---

<sup>53</sup> Janusz-Pawletta, 14



state actions.<sup>54</sup> However, as of March 2014 Iran supports the application of the “closed sea” concept to the Caspian legal regime.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet Union, seeking to undo the imperialist policies of its predecessor state, abrogated the Treaty of Turkamanchai in 1921 with the Treaty of Friendship between Iran and the USSR. This treaty afforded to both states the free, unrestricted right of navigation in all parts of the Caspian Sea.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the Treaty of Establishment, Commerce and Navigation, concluded between Iran and the USSR in 1935, established exclusive economic zones of ten nautical miles off the coastlines of each country for fishing purposes and allowed ships from each state to fly their own flag outside of this economic zone. Iran and the USSR expanded this treaty in 1940 to stipulate that ships flying foreign flags would be barred from sailing in the Caspian Sea. Despite the contemporary arguments by certain littoral states against the application of the 1921 and 1940 treaties after the USSR’s dissolution, both Diba and Janusz-Pawletta argue that these treaties retain their validity for determining the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

Yet in spite of these documents, Diba argues that the power dynamics at work on the Caspian Sea contradicted the black-letter text of the concluded agreements. Soviet ships accounted for the vast majority of the naval presence in the Caspian Sea, and Iran, partly out of a desire not to antagonize the Soviet Union, refrained from sailing north.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, although the presence of oil in the Caspian region had been known since Robert Nobel’s

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Diba, 19

<sup>56</sup> Diba, 21

establishment of Petrole Nobel Freres in Baku in 1873, the 1921 and 1940 treaties did not regulate the use of the Caspian's non-living resources. In practice, Russian control of the Caspian translated to Russian domination over seabed exploration and oil prospecting, even extracting what would today be considered Iran's share of Caspian oil resources.<sup>57</sup> This subject, however, remains a critical point for modern negotiations between the littoral states over the Caspian legal status and regime.

### **The Caspian Legal Regime after the Fall of the USSR**

*Foreign Policy* contributor Joshua Kucera argues that Russian hegemony over the Caspian Sea remained uncontested for much of history due to its contemporary status as a “strategic backwater.”<sup>58</sup> However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and formation of three new littoral states—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan—has bestowed immense strategic value upon the Caspian Basin, whose countries remain locked in debate over the sea's legal status. Russia, traditionally the Caspian hegemon, now contends with the growing naval forces of four other countries for the resource wealth of what geographers consider the world's largest lake. Indeed, this question—whether to consider the Caspian a sea or a lake by legal standards—played a central role in much of the discourse on the

---

<sup>57</sup> Diba, 25

<sup>58</sup> Joshua Kucera, “The Great Caspian Arms Race,” *Foreign Policy*, June 22, 2012

region's legal regime after the fall of the Soviet Union,<sup>59</sup> though by 2015 the littoral states had largely resolved the issue.<sup>60</sup>

Immediately following the Soviet Union's collapse, Russia and Iran led an initiative to maintain the classification of the Caspian Sea as a lake shared by the littoral states on a condominium basis: under this paradigm, states could extract resources from the Caspian Sea as their needs demanded. Largely following the framework established by the 1921 and 1940 treaties, Russia submitted its position to the UN on October 5, 1994, adding its support for "20-mile territorial waters plus an additional 20-mile exclusive economic zone leading to common ownership... by all riparian states." Even as early as 1994, Russia took a firm stance against outsider intervention in the Caspian legal regime's development, claiming inapplicability of the Law of the Sea and deeming any unilateral action "unlawful and [not] recognized by the Russian Federation."<sup>61</sup>

The newly formed Caspian littoral states have raised objections to reliance on the 1921 and 1940 treaties. Azerbaijan, for instance, cited the legal principles of *rebus sic stantibus* and "Clean Slate" to argue that due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, previously concluded treaties between Iran and Russia—the latter recognized as the successor state of the Soviet Union—should not apply to the newly independent Central Asian republics. Kazakhstan, unique among the five littoral states, has called for determination of the Caspian legal regime in accordance with the 1982 Convention for the International Regime

---

<sup>59</sup> Mustafa Aydın, "Oil, Pipelines and Security: The Geo-Politics of the Caspian Region" in *The Caspian Region: A Re-Emerging Region, Volume I*, ed. Moshe Gammer, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 9

<sup>60</sup> Janusz-Pawletta, 3

<sup>61</sup> Aydın, 9-11

of the Seas, partially due to its interests in preserving access to the Volga River via the Caspian Sea.<sup>62</sup> These objections have hindered Russian efforts to preserve the 1921 and 1940 treaties as the defining documents of the Caspian legal regime.

However, Russia has worked to advance its interests in defining the Caspian legal regime through other means, including signing bilateral treaties with Kazakhstan on June 6, 1998 and Azerbaijan on January 12, 2001.<sup>63</sup> These documents affirmed Kazakh and Azeri support for Caspian seabed division according to the “Modified Median Line” principle, which Diba describes as follows:

1. “Dividing the seabed of the Caspian Seas, according to a median or equidistance line from the shorelines of the concerned countries.
2. Changing (or modifying) the line of demarcation, according to selected natural elements, such as seabed elevations and manmade elements, such as established installations (by mutual agreement).
3. Leaving the superjacent waters free for navigation by all littoral countries of the Caspian Sea.”<sup>64</sup>

Resolving the Caspian legal regime in this way would help to establish Russia as the hegemonic figure in Caspian affairs, as well as providing Russia with access to 20% of the Caspian seabed and establishing a maritime border with Iran that national division of the seabed would preclude. Azerbaijan, meanwhile, would gain access to 4 billion tons in hydrocarbon reserves, compared with the 2.84 billion tons of hydrocarbon reserves that would be claimed by Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan under Iran’s proposal for equal division of the seabed.

---

<sup>62</sup> *Payvand News Agency*, “Iran’s Changing Perspectives & Policies on the Caspian Sea: Interview with Abbas Maleki,” March 22, 2001

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Bahman Aghai Diba, “Russian-Azerbaijan Agreement in the Caspian Sea: What Does It Mean for Iran?” *Payvand News Agency*, October 17, 2002

Meanwhile, Iran's position on the Caspian legal regime status has changed numerous times since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1994 Iran joined the newly-formed former Soviet republics in calling for a littoral state consensus on the legal regime, while also pushing for an extension of each country's EEZs to 20-50 miles off the coast and the formulation of a legal regime for issues not covered in the 1921 and 1940 treaties, including petroleum resource usage. After the meeting of the Organisation for Co-operation between the Caspian Littoral States (OCCLS) in 1996, Iran agreed to a common use framework for Caspian Sea resource usage, which would allow countries to draw on Caspian resources on a condominium basis.<sup>65</sup> However, since 1997 Iran has undergone a paradigm shift from an economic view of Caspian policy to a security view. Iran holds that Russia's conclusion of the aforementioned bilateral treaties with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, which reinforce the hegemony of the "Modified Median Line," violate the principle of littoral state consensus, and has since called for the equal division of the Caspian seabed between each of the littoral states.<sup>66</sup> International Institute for Caspian Studies Chairman Abbas Maleki observes that since 2001, in view of what Iran considered illegitimate Russian bilateral treaties, the Iranian government conducts its affairs in the Caspian Sea with little regard for the previously established legal framework.<sup>67</sup> Turkmenistan has also lent some support to Iran's equal distribution plan, as the modified median line distribution would favor Azerbaijan over Turkmenistan.

---

<sup>65</sup> Diba, 39

<sup>66</sup> "Iran's Changing Perspectives," *Payvand News Agency*, March 22, 2001

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## Geopolitical Developments, Alliances, and Capacities for Legal Revisionism

Azerbaijan's 1991 initiative to engage with multinational oil corporations for the development of its resource market, culminating in what is now known as the "Contract of the Century" in 1994, represents one of the key critical developments in the revision of the Caspian legal regime. This initiative has transformed Baku into a dominant regional actor not only in the economic sphere, but also in terms of military strength and diplomatic soft power. Initially, the other littoral states fiercely condemned Azerbaijan's unilateral action on what Russia and Iran then considered a joint resource shared on a condominium basis between all of the littoral states and free of outside influence or intervention, but all of the littoral states have since followed suit in opening to foreign investment. This phenomenon demonstrates Azerbaijan's capacity to alter precedents for joint use of Caspian resources, and the "labyrinth" position of Azerbaijan between Turkey, Russia, and Iran enables Baku to serve as a "Caucasian Geneva."<sup>68</sup> Moreover, Azerbaijan's stronger connections with the West make the country an important hub to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan for access to Western markets, giving Azerbaijan a significant level of soft power, which İlham Aliyev could conceivably use to persuade Caspian littoral states to form coalitions regarding the sea's legal regime.

This soft power holds considerable relevance considering Azerbaijan's alliance with Turkey, a relationship founded on deep cultural, historical, linguistic, and religious

---

<sup>68</sup> Javid Valiyev, "Foreign Policy of Azerbaijan in 25 Years of Independence: Priorities, Principles and Achievements" in *Caucasus International*, vol. 7, no. 1, Summer 2017, pp. 29-47; Joshua Kucera, "With Russia-NATO Meeting, is Baku the New Caucasian Geneva?" *The Bug Pit*, September 8, 2017

bonds and reinforced by Turkish and European energy security interests, as well as ongoing tensions with Armenia. The collapse of the Soviet Union, together with linguistic bonds between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and other Central Asian Turkic states, gave rise to pan-Turkic sentiments under Turgut Özal, including increased Turkish investment in Central Asia.<sup>69</sup> Pan-Turkism has never since reached the peak of popularity it attained under Özal—a fact which Dekmejian and Simonian attribute largely to the resurgence of Russia and Iran—and the rift between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and controversial Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen has led to Turkish pressure on Central Asian states to close Gülenist schools, formerly a major source of Turkish soft power.<sup>70</sup> However, the idea of pan-Turkism still holds sway among prominent Azerbaijanis: for instance, Azerbaijani academic and prominent member of Azerbaijan’s Human Rights Institute Elşən Nəsimov evokes pan-Turkic sentiment in his support for Turkey as a model for exporting democracy, human rights, and free market economics to other Central Asian countries.<sup>71</sup> Like Azerbaijan, Turkey serves as a major transit hub for many Central Asian countries to Europe, giving Turkey the potential to play a prominent role in the market integration of the Turkic Caspian littoral states and to negotiate coalitions regarding Caspian governance.

Valiyev notes that Azerbaijan and Turkey maintain strong security ties despite the relative decline in pan-Turkic sentiment, and the conclusion of numerous pipeline and

---

<sup>69</sup> R. Hrair Dekmejian and Hovann H. Simonian, *Troubled Waters: The Geopolitics of the Caspian Region*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2003, p. 108

<sup>70</sup> Catherine Putz, “Turkish Targeting of Gülen Movement Reaches into Central Asia,” *The Diplomat*, July 25, 2016

<sup>71</sup> Elşən Nəsimov, *ABŞ və Türkiyənin Qafqaz Geosiyasi Regionunda Strateji Maraqları və Azərbaycan Respublikası* (The US and Turkey’s Strategic Interests in the Caucasus and the Republic of Azerbaijan), Baku: Çıraq, 2006, p. 6

railroad projects passing from Baku to Turkey through Tbilisi has greatly increased Turkish influence in the Caspian region.<sup>72</sup> On the most basic level, Turkey has pushed for the construction of pipelines to Turkey as a means of reducing energy dependence on Russia, both for Turkey and the European Union.<sup>73</sup> To this same end Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Turkey have even made plans for the construction of a Trans-Caspian pipeline that would link Turkmen gas to European markets via Turkey, although Russia would almost certainly oppose this plan diplomatically and militarily.<sup>74</sup> However, Turkey also hopes its status as a hub for oil and gas will draw transit fees and other economic benefits, as well as reduce dependency on Arab and Russian petroleum and strengthen Turkey's geostrategic position and relevance to Western interests.<sup>75</sup> Turkey has also spoken out against the overreliance of foreign countries on the Turkish Straits for transit, decrying the potential for serious ecological damage to the Straits and stating that the Turkish government "would not allow the Bosphorus to become a pipeline for Caspian crude."<sup>76</sup> Turkey has used access to the Straits as a geopolitical bargaining chip in the past, closing off Russian access in response to the 1993 Russian-backed coup in Georgia.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> These projects include the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline inaugurated on May 28, 2006, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) gas pipeline inaugurated on December 15, 2006, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railroad inaugurated on October 30, 2017.

<sup>73</sup> Madalina Susu Vicari, "The Southern Gas Corridor and Turkey," in *Enerji Diplomasisi*, eds. Hasret Çomak, Caner Sancaktar, and Zafer Yıldırım, Istanbul: Beta Basım Yayım Dağıtım A.Ş., 2015, pp. 517-537

<sup>74</sup> Dettoni, "Russia and Iran Lock NATO Out of Caspian Sea"

<sup>75</sup> Dekmejian and Simonian, 109

<sup>76</sup> Paul Rivlin, "Oil and Gas in the Economies of the Caspian Region" in *The Caspian Region Volume I*, ed. Gammer, p. 34

<sup>77</sup> Dekmejian and Simonian, 110



Turkey's membership in NATO, as well as its geostrategic position, has evoked considerable US interest in supporting Turkey's dealings with the Caspian littoral states. For example, the US government provided American and Western oil companies with incentives to work on construction of the BTC pipeline passing through Turkey instead of the cheaper and more stable Baku-Supsa route planned by some oil companies.<sup>78</sup> The US favored this plan—a part of a larger US-Turkey-Azerbaijan alliance—as a means of expanding Western influence into the Caucasus, ostensibly at the expense of Russian hegemony. Indeed, this plan coincides with the conclusion of an agreement between NATO members and some former Soviet states known as the GUUAM agreement, named after Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Armenia, and Moldova, countries concerned with a potential resurgence in Russian expansionism.<sup>79</sup> The unique status of Turkey and Azerbaijan as predominantly Muslim allies of Israel—albeit with some hiccups in Turkey's case—has also contributed to the solidification of the US relationship with Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

Azerbaijan's potential for alliance with Turkey—and hence with NATO—on issues of Caspian Sea geopolitics has certain limitations, to be sure. Azerbaijan's 2007 National Security Strategy advanced the view of any economic or military dependence as a threat to Azerbaijani sovereignty. Moreover, despite Baku's objection to the Russian-backed Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the organization's support for

---

<sup>78</sup> Rivlin, 34

<sup>79</sup> Timothy L. Thomas, "Russian National Interests and the Caspian Sea," *Perceptions*, vol. 4, no. 4, December 1999-February 2000, pp. 75-96

Armenia during the Nagorno-Karabakh War, Azerbaijani leaders also see NATO as inconsistent on the support of territorial integrity in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine.<sup>80</sup>

As the regional hegemon and the successor to the Soviet Union, Russia retains significant influence over the development and potential revision of the Caspian legal regime. In addition to the aforementioned bilateral treaties with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, Russia's Foreign Ministry has also worked to secure a legal status that would essentially grant Russia veto power over any proposed pipelines built in the Caspian Sea. These efforts include—but are not limited to—the signature of an agreement between Russia and Kazakhstan requiring joint approval of pipelines in shared waters.<sup>81</sup> As late as 2004, the Novorossiisk pipeline from Kazakhstan to Russia remained the sole route for the transport of gas to Europe, and even now, after the development of the BTC and BTE pipelines, Russian influence remains a dominant force shaping the Kazakh oil market.<sup>82</sup>

Russia also has a history of stoking conflicts within country borders in order to gain political advantage. Despite reciprocal allegations between Moscow and Ankara of interference in Eastern Anatolia, Chechnya, and Dagestan, Turkey and Russia have generally agreed not to engage in incitement of domestic insurgency against each other due partly to the high trade volume between the two, which surpasses Turkey's trade with all of Central Asia.<sup>83</sup> However, Russia has numerous opportunities to place pressure on countries aligned with Turkey in order to create a political climate more favorable to its

---

<sup>80</sup> Javid Valiyev, "Foreign Policy of Azerbaijan in 25 Years of Independence: Priorities, Principles and Achievements," in *Caucasus International*, vol. 7, no. 1, Summer 2017, pp. 29-47

<sup>81</sup> Aydın, 10-11

<sup>82</sup> Rivlin, 34

<sup>83</sup> Dekmejian and Simonian, 111

interests. Russian support of Armenian fighters in Nagorno-Karabakh—to the tune of \$1 billion—provides such an example,<sup>84</sup> and the formation of an axis between Russian, Iran, Armenia, and Greece to combat perceived NATO intervention in the Caspian Sea indicates the possibility for Russia to use Nagorno-Karabakh as a bargaining chip or pressure point in the future. Additionally, some of the oil pipelines of the Southern Gas Corridor run through disputed or otherwise dangerous territories, a situation which Russia may have a capacity to exploit in order to diminish Turkish and NATO influence over the Caspian legal regime. For instance, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) runs from Turkey's border with Georgia—a country with prominent irredentist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that Russia has supported in the past—to Turkey's border with Greece, a border made contentious by the Cyprus issue and the presence of Russian warships. Considering the high priority assigned to Georgia by Moscow due to the former's Black Sea location, Russian intervention in the country's irredentist movements remains within the realm of possibility.<sup>85</sup>

Russia and Iran remain wary of NATO intervention and its potential to infringe on regional interests. In 2014 NATO engaged in talks with leaders of Caspian littoral states, offering naval development assistance and aiming to negotiate a NATO-leaning naval base in Aktau, Kazakhstan. However, led by Russia and Iran, the Caspian states made clear that they would not welcome a NATO military presence. Iran in particular expressed concern that the US might use Caspian naval bases to place pressure on Iran's nuclear program.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Valiyev, "Foreign Policy of Azerbaijan in 25 Years of Independence"

<sup>85</sup> Dekmejian and Simonian, 113

<sup>86</sup> Dettoni, "Russia and Iran Lock NATO Out of Caspian Sea"

Since 2014, Iran and the United States have signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action limiting Iran's nuclear capability in exchange for the easing of sanctions. However, this deal remains controversial in the US, and while President Donald Trump has not successfully managed to nullify the JCPOA as promised in his campaign, his recent decision to decertify Iran's compliance with the deal has called the agreement's future into question. Given the interest of NATO, Turkey, and the US in neighboring Azerbaijan, NATO leaders could utilize Azerbaijani soft power and recent developments in Iranian relations to persuade Iran to join Azerbaijan and other Caspian states in pushing for revision of the Caspian legal regime. However, Russia's high level of military cooperation with Iran on matters such as the Syria conflict and sales of weapons to Iran would certainly render Russia opposed and possibly belligerent to such efforts on the part of Turkey or its allies.

## **Conclusions**

The ongoing debate over the legal status and allocation of resources in the Caspian Sea leaves ample opportunities for regional and international state actors to alter the precedents and power dynamics governing the legal regime, whether through hard military strength or soft-power coalition building. The future of this legal regime will rely not only on consensus between the five littoral states, but also on the capacity of each state to build alliances with each other and with actors outside the immediate Caspian Sea region. Russia will no doubt view Turkish plans for the expansion of pipelines to Turkey and Europe from

as far away as China with suspicion of intent to subvert Russian's hegemonic position in the region and undermine Russia's gas exports. Turkey's membership in NATO and the particular attention paid by American foreign policymakers to the Caspian region has granted Turkey the potential to exert considerable influence over the debate on Caspian resource allocation, and the interdependence of the Turkish and Russian economies may render direct conflict between the two inadvisable. However, Russia can still check Turkish influence in the Caspian by other means, including support for irredentist movements in Armenia and Georgia and a long-standing military alliance with Iran, aimed largely at combating foreign intervention in the Caspian Sea.

### **Limitations, Avenues for Future Research, and Connections with Present Research**

The present thesis's focus on areas of geostrategic conflict between Turkey and Russia does not negate the crucial importance of environmental protection in the Caspian Basin and mitigation of the adverse effects of petroleum extraction in the Caspian Sea. Already many parts of Caspian waters are considered unsafe for swimming, and scientists have warned that pollution in the area could turn the Caspian Sea into a marsh if left unchecked.<sup>87</sup> Mustafa Aydın places much of the blame on the Soviet Union, saying that "[t]he general ecological situation throughout the region is already beyond recovery."<sup>88</sup> Additionally, Azerbaijani development in the Caspian Sea has raised concerns at the

---

<sup>87</sup> Diba, 16

<sup>88</sup> Aydın, 21

Iranian-based International Institute for Caspian Studies that pollution from Baku might spill over into Iran or other countries. Azerbaijan has proposed relying on the Caspian Environment Project, a joint project of the World Bank and Global Environment Fund, but Turkmenistan and Iran have not signed onto this project, and the involvement of international organizations may raise Russian and Iranian suspicions.<sup>89</sup> Caspian petroleum extraction has also adversely affected the sea's sturgeon population, a population crucial to the Russian caviar industry as well as the overall Caspian ecosystem.<sup>90</sup> Although the Caspian littoral states, especially Russia and Iran, would likely reject Janusz-Pawletta's proposal to apply international legal principles to the Caspian environmental regime, the pressure of environmental pollution on the caviar population will require the negotiation of environmental principles and regulation in the area, either regionally or internationally.

The politicization of environmental impact in the Caspian also merits further investigation. In spite of the considerable attention given to Azerbaijan's environmentally dangerous activities in the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oil fields, Russia remains the most significant polluter in the Caspian Sea.<sup>91</sup> Aydın notes the irony of Russia raising environmental concerns over the declining sturgeon population given this fact, suggesting that Russia may be using these environmental concerns as a coded means of pushing its own agenda for the Caspian legal regime.

---

<sup>89</sup> *Payvand News Agency*, "Iran's Changing Perspectives," March 22, 2001

<sup>90</sup> Diba, 17; 23; *BBC Azerbaijani*, "Bakı: Transxəzər nəqliyyat layihəsinin tədbirlər planı imzalanıb" [Baku: Agreement on Trans-Caspian Pipeline blueprint signed], April 1, 2017

<sup>91</sup> Aydın, 22

The expansion of China's Silk Road project and the yuan's increasing purchasing power will likely cause China to become a significant player in Caspian politics, especially as rapid industrialization and urban development increase Chinese energy needs drastically. Turkmenistan has emerged in strong competition with Russia as a supplier of petroleum to China, and its connection to the Caspian Sea may provide China with an outlet to engage with other gas-rich Caspian littoral states. Already an April 1, 2017 plan for a Trans-Caspian pipeline passing from China to Ukraine through Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan has provoked fierce opposition and even threats of military action from Russia.<sup>92</sup> Chinese involvement in the region could complicate matters further, opening new avenues for future conflict or cooperation.

As with the chapter on the Turkish Straits, analysis of the Caspian legal regime from a realist perspective, which this chapter has sought to undertake, provides valuable insight into the factors that are likely to influence the decisions made by either the Turkish or the Russian government. However, such knowledge can only go so far in predicting how either of these states will act in the future. To prepare for the most likely outcomes of Turkish and Russian competition and cooperation in the Turkish Straits and the Caspian, we have to understand how national identity, history, and self-perception affect the decisions of those in power. This thesis will aim to answer that question in the third chapter.

---

<sup>92</sup> Dettoni, "Russia and Iran Lock NATO Out of Caspian Sea"

## **The Influence of Self-Perception on Turkish-Russian Relations**

Thus far the present thesis has analyzed the legal regimes of the Black and Caspian Sea littoral systems through the realist geopolitical lens developed by Western intellectuals including—but certainly not limited to—Hans Morgenthau, John Mearsheimer, and Zbigniew Brzezinski. I have made this decision both unconsciously and consciously: unconsciously, as a product of American educational and professional institutions that expect a certain theoretical background of their students and practitioners; and consciously, as a means of examining the differences between the realist lens—which serves both the identitarian and practical purposes of Western states—and the theories and views of international relations popular in both Turkey and Russia. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the self-perception of Turkey and Russia in regard to the pursuit of their interests in the Black and Caspian Sea may not negate the similar pursuits of the US and NATO either by diplomatic or military means. However, the development of a holistic strategy for engaging Turkey and Russia on either of these levels, as both the US and NATO strive to do, necessitates an understanding of how Turkish and Russian perceptions of self in relation to geography and geostrategic competitors shapes policy, military priority, and willingness to negotiate.

This analysis begins by utilizing the models of decision-making posited by Margaret and Charles Hermann and Graham Allison to determine the relevant actors in Turkish and Russian foreign policy and the philosophical ideas that guide these actors. This analysis recognizes that an actor's capacity to make foreign policy decisions, and hence



the impact of the actor's guiding philosophy, may face constraints of varying degree based on the strength of democratic and bureaucratic institutions. Subsequently, this chapter will examine more closely the philosophical underpinnings of the most relevant actors' decisions regarding the Black and Caspian Seas, both in isolation from and in discourse with Western academics and policymakers. Based on this information, this chapter will provide insight on how Turkish and Russian self-perception and identity influence policy decisions with regard to the legal regimes and practical actions surrounding waterways shared between the two countries.

Ultimately, this chapter concludes that both Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan operate under philosophies that urge the creation of an outward-looking state with strong central leadership that can mitigate the influence of other powerful actors in the two leaders' respective countries. Although the direct influences of specific actors such as Ahmet Davutoğlu and Aleksandr Dugin have waned, the ideologies of neo-Eurasianism and neo-Ottomanism have permeated both policy and academic spheres, and thus must be understood to make sense of the strategies that both countries will likely employ in negotiating foreign policy outcomes between themselves and Western allies. In this regard, both Turkey and Russia, which have seen a gradual shift toward authoritarianism in recent years and have both sought to distance themselves from the West, have a strong potential to become closer allies. However, the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits remain a historical battleground for Turkey and Russia, most notably after the Turkish Straits crisis from 1946-1953, and Turkey's interest in creating a gas corridor running from the Caspian states to Europe poses a challenge to Russia's oil diplomacy. Thus, the legal regimes and politics

of waterways disputed between these two countries illuminate potential areas for the United States and its allies to encourage bilateral or multilateral cooperation for the preservation of present alliances and maintenance of global security.

### **Determining Relevant Actors and Philosophies**

Writing on the limits of realism in explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, Graham Allison observes that “[t]here exists no pattern of activity for which an imaginative analyst cannot write a large number of objective functions such that the pattern of activity maximizes each function.”<sup>93</sup> In this regard, the rationality-based neorealist school of international politics theory—or even predictive foreign policy theory, as Colin Elman suggests (though seminal neorealist Kenneth Waltz would disagree)—relies greatly on hindsight and reductionism, a claim which Elman acknowledges but which falls beyond the scope of his argument.<sup>94</sup> As a substitute to the rationality model, Graham Allison proposes two differing models: the organizational process model and the governmental politics model, both of which acknowledge the role of a state’s unique political structures and the role that influential individuals can play in shaping foreign policy. To use the United States as an example, the actions potentially undertaken by an actor are constrained

---

<sup>93</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence Of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, London: Longman, 1999, p. 26

<sup>94</sup> Colin Elman, “Horses for Courses: Why not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 6(1), 1996, 7-53

in the first model by a parliamentary process such as the Congress, and in the second model by the interests of powerful actors such as lobbying groups.

Margaret and Charles Hermann take this approach one step further, arguing that depending on the foreign policy issue or level of severity, a country's political system may rely on different power actors to resolve the issue, whether a predominant leader, a single group, or multiple autonomous actors.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, two or more of these power structures may be present at a time, such as a predominant leader who acts under the influence or counsel of autonomous actors. Determining the applicability of each of these models necessitates an understanding of the extent to which elected bodies or special power interests can wield power in a country.<sup>96</sup> The subsequent sections will aim to answer this question by considering the historical development of power structures within Turkey and Russia and the efforts of both Erdoğan and Putin to consolidate power and transform their respective countries on an institutional level.

### **Turkey's Authoritarian Backslide and Presidential Transformation**

In a 2003 paper presented at the American Political Science Association's conference, Murat and Umut Özkaleli examine the nature of Turkish democracy to evaluate

---

<sup>95</sup> Margaret G. Hermann and Charles F. Hermann, "Who makes foreign policy decisions and how: An empirical inquiry," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no.4 (1989), pp. 361-387

<sup>96</sup> Hermann and Hermann attempt to characterize the regime types of both Turkey and the Soviet Union based on an empirical analysis using their conceived parameters; however, the dataset for this characterization ends in 1968, and the authors themselves concede that "a more detailed case study analysis of specific problems" would facilitate the identification of "ultimate decision units." Indeed, although the chart presented analyzes country leadership from 1959-1968, the analysis of Turkey's leaders begins in 1960, omitting the military coup that brought Cemal Gürsel to power. Hence, this paper aims to rely more directly on academic sources dealing with contemporary leaders and institutional structures in Turkey and Russia.

its applicability as a model for democratization in the Muslim world. The Turkish model has a constitution that maintains the republic's secular nature and acknowledges the military's role in preserving Turkish democracy.<sup>97</sup> Almost unique within the Muslim world, Turkey managed to preserve a democratic government for much of its modern existence, including a multi-party electoral system in which participants, despite ideological differences, generally support the creation and maintenance of a secular, nationalist state.<sup>98</sup> Yet Özkaleli and Özkaleli suggest likewise that Turkish democracy as a model may be more hegemonic than institutional, particularly looking at the case of Pakistan, which sought mostly to implement the military characteristics of this system. Indeed, the role of the Turkish military in carrying out open coups amid periods of widespread civil unrest in 1960, 1971 and 1980, and a soft power coup in 1997, speaks to the fragile nature of Turkish democracy at the time of Özkaleli and Özkaleli's writing.<sup>99</sup>

13 years after this article's publication, on July 15, 2016, the Turkish military would attempt another coup against current leader Erdoğan, whose presidency was controversial in military circles due to the political Islamism of his Justice and Development Party (AKP) and his repression of civil liberties. But this time, Erdoğan remained in power, thanks

---

<sup>97</sup> Ferit Murat Özkaleli and Umut Konoloğlu Özkaleli, "The Myth and the Reality about Turkish Model-Democratization in the Muslim World," *American Political Science Association*, 2003

<sup>98</sup> The claim of Turkish democracy's near-uniqueness is in part based on the reports of the *Freedom House* index, which, like any metric for a concept as vague and nebulous as democracy, may have limits based on its criteria, location, and ability to conduct effective ground-level evaluation of democratic processes. This caveat is less relevant when discussing Turkey, a country which has maintained a healthy democracy throughout the early 2000s and experienced a drastic relapse into autocracy in recent years as confirmed by other democratic indices such as *Polity IV*. However, this caveat becomes more relevant when discussing Russia, a country which *Polity IV* considers an "open anocracy" and which *Freedom House* ranks as bordering on consolidated authoritarian.

<sup>99</sup> *Al Jazeera*, "Timeline: A history of Turkish coups," July 15, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/04/20124472814687973.html>

largely to his successful mobilization of Turkish citizens to stand against the military and the failure of the army faction to secure either strong public or broader military support.<sup>100</sup> Since the time of the coup, in addition to firing high-ranking university professors and cracking down on dissent, the Erdoğan administration has taken steps to eliminate the military's role in the Turkish government. The state of emergency declared after the military coup lasted through the early months of 2017, even during Erdoğan's constitutional referendum.

The referendum put to vote in April 2017 most notoriously sought to change Turkey's democracy from a parliamentary system to a presidential one, abolishing the position of Prime Minister and granting Erdoğan more power as both Head of State and Government, with the capacity to issue executive decrees to be enshrined in law by Parliament. However, many of the articles in this referendum also deal with the power of the military and can be read as an attempt to decrease military influence in the aftermath of the July 15 military coup attempt. Article 76 of the new Turkish constitution renders Turkish citizens with ties to the military ineligible for Parliamentary candidacy, while article 142 would abolish military courts except in time of war.<sup>101</sup> This latter change was annulled by the Constitutional Commission, alongside changes to the president's powers to appoint bureaucratic officials and "reserve MPs," but the message sent to the military in

---

<sup>100</sup> *BBC News*, "Turkey's coup attempt: What you need to know," July 17, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36816045>

<sup>101</sup> *Turkish Bar Union*, "Anayasa Değişikliği Teklifi'nin Karşılaştırmalı ve Açıklamalı Metni" (Text of Proposed Constitutional Changes with Comparison and Explanation), DOA March 17, 2018, [http://anayasadegisikligi.barobirlik.org.tr/Anayasa\\_Degisikligi.aspx](http://anayasadegisikligi.barobirlik.org.tr/Anayasa_Degisikligi.aspx)

the referendum language remains clear.<sup>102</sup> This referendum passed, albeit by a slim margin, to the chagrin of international observers and democracy-promoting organizations. By 2017 Turkey's Freedom House score had already been on a steady decline due largely to crackdowns on civil liberties and assaults on the press,<sup>103</sup> but the Polity IV index, which historically graded Turkish democracy more favorably, drastically downgraded Turkey from a democracy (with a score of 9) to an open anocracy in 2014 (3) and then to a closed anocracy in 2016 (-4).<sup>104</sup>

Hence, since the July 15 military coup the Erdoğan administration has moved to consolidate power in the executive and the Parliament, at the expense of the military, and with the President as head of both government and state. Erdoğan has therefore emerged as the primary power actor in Turkey, and thus this paper will focus primarily on analyzing the political and identitarian philosophies of Erdoğan in order to determine how they shape foreign policy. However, although the failure of the July 15 coup attempt and subsequent barring of military officials from serving in Parliament constitutes an attempt to undermine military influence, one should not assume that the Turkish military has disappeared as a force in Turkish politics. This coup attempt failed not only because of Erdoğan's popularity among the Turkish public, but also because of the failure of the rebelling military faction to garner wider support among the military. Whether or not that support will materialize in future years may remain to be seen.

---

<sup>102</sup> *Birgun*, "Anayasa teklifi değişti: 21 maddeden ikisi iptal" (Constitutional proposal changes: two of 21 articles removed), December 28, 2017, <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/anayasa-teklifi-degisti-21-maddeden-ikisi-iptal-141183.html>

<sup>103</sup> *Freedom House*, "Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis," DOA March 17, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>

<sup>104</sup> *Systemic Peace*, "Polity IV Annual Time Series, 1800-2016," DOA March 17, 2018

## Erdoğan, Davutoğlu, and Neo-Ottomanism

With Ahmet Davutoğlu ousted from his position as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2016, one may be tempted to imagine that the influence of his neo-Ottoman worldview of foreign policy has dwindled. Yet several occurrences within the Erdoğan presidency, as well as the overall Islamist bent of Erdoğan's AKP, indicate that the influence of Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth doctrine and foreign policy theory, especially as a response to the foreign policy of previous leaders, remains alive and well. Davutoğlu's critiques of the military as guardian of Turkish democracy are echoed in the recent anti-military steps taken by Erdoğan in the wake of the failed coup, and Erdoğan's tendency to lash out against European world leaders—including accusing Dutch leaders of being "Nazi remnants"—reaffirms the opposition to universalized globalization posited by Davutoğlu.<sup>105</sup> In order to understand the impact of Davutoğlu on foreign policy, one must first understand how his philosophy of international relations arose in a wider Turkish context.

Alexander Murinson defines Turkish foreign policy as being influenced by five main sources: the Ottoman experience of balance of power (as evidenced in Chapter 1); the Kemalist doctrine of isolationism; the drive for European modernization; Turkish suspicion of foreign powers (which coincides with the balance of power experience); and the rise of pan-Turkism.<sup>106</sup> For much of its history, the Republic of Turkey followed a Kemalist logic of secular nationalism guarded by the military, even sustaining several

---

<sup>105</sup> *BBC News*, "Turkey's Erdogan calls Dutch authorities 'Nazi remnants,'" March 11, 2017

<sup>106</sup> Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 42, no. 6, November 2006, pp. 945-964

military coups, as noted in the previous section. However, since the end of the Cold War, Turkish foreign policy underwent a paradigm shift that Murinson describes as outward-looking and largely applying domestic policy (particularly with regard to the PKK) to the foreign policy arena. This foreign policy, conceived as distinct from Kemalism and put into practice by Turgut Özal's administration, became known as neo-Ottomanism.<sup>107</sup>

Contemporary columnist Cengiz Candar described Özal's neo-Ottomanism as "an intellectual movement that advocated Turkish pursuit of active and diversified foreign policy in the region based on the Ottoman historical heritage. The neo-Ottomans envisioned Turkey as a leader of Muslim and Turkic worlds and a central power in Eurasia."<sup>108</sup> Murinson observes common themes between this foreign policy doctrine and Thatcherism, while also noting the Özal administration's increased questioning of the military's role in government, a trend continued by the Erdoğan administration. However, while this period saw the genesis of neo-Ottoman thought, the role of this philosophy in foreign policy would be further consolidated by Erdoğan and his close advisor, then Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Davutoğlu's strategic depth doctrine, which rose to prominence thanks largely to his 2001 book of the same name, began to form in his 1998 article "The Clash of Interests: An Explanation of the World (Dis)Order."<sup>109</sup> In this article, Davutoğlu critiques Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" theory and Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" theory, calling for a re-assessment of the US' foreign policy role and an establishment of

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.



“inter-civilizational dialogue” as opposed to the “clash” proposed by Huntington. According to this paradigm, Turkey—as a Republic and the successor state to the Ottoman Empire—is a culture, geography and civilization separate from the West that cannot be defined by the same international relations paradigms and worldviews. For example, the concept of offshore balancing developed by Mearsheimer works well for a country isolated from the rest of the world by two large oceans, like the United States, but is less applicable to a land-based power such as Turkey.

Davutoğlu’s body of work offers an equal measure of critiques against Turkey’s relationship with NATO and the potentially destabilizing “virulent nationalism” of Russia, and instead calls on Turkey to adopt Islam and Islamism as a means of projecting Turkish soft power, particularly after the collapse of Soviet-style atheist authoritarianism. However, rather than recommend a severance of ties with either side, Davutoğlu frames the discourse in terms of caution and “strategic parameters,” echoing the Ottoman-era balance of power that governed Turkish foreign policy with regard to the Turkish Straits. Indeed, the Turkish Straits play a particularly important role for Davutoğlu, who views them as one of Turkey’s “chokepoints” and a vital territory in Turkey’s horizontal (North-South) geographic orientation, linking the Balkans and the Caucasus to the geoeconomic resource centers of the Caspian and the Middle East.<sup>110</sup> This emphasis on the Straits, combined with the Erdoğan administration’s distrust of foreign powers in the Straits as enumerated in Chapter 1, indicates that the US should consider Turkish skepticism of

---

<sup>110</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Stratejik Derinlik” (Strategic Depth), Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001, p. 116

NATO involvement in the Black Sea within the context of balance of power between Western powers and Russia.

For a more complex example of Erdoğan's relationship with the strategic depth doctrine, one can look at his efforts to engage more actively in Central Asia, the location of three Turkic Caspian littoral states—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan—and, historically, a region falling squarely within Russia's sphere of influence. While Davutoğlu has criticized the pan-Turkist philosophy of former Turkish Presidents Turgut Özal and Süleyman Demirel for lacking strategic depth, Central Asian countries remained among Turkey's most important trading partners, as well as members in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation. Initially, the Erdoğan administration attempted to spread Turkish soft power throughout the region by way of establishing Islamist schools associated with Fethullah Gülen's Hizmet movement, established after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Certainly this strategy coincides more with the pan-Islamist interpretation of Davutoğlu than with the pan-Turkism of Özal.

Yet after the December 2013 corruption scandal in Turkey, a rift began to form between Erdoğan and Gülen, with the former accusing the latter of attempting to create a parallel state and even accusing Gülen of masterminding the July 15 coup attempt from a position of exile in Pennsylvania. This parallel state rhetoric has been subsequently adopted by Turkish allies in Central Asia such as Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, which, together with Uzbekistan's earlier action in 1999, closed down schools associated with the Gülenist movement at the urging of the Turkish government between 2014 and 2015.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Samantha Brletich, "Tajikistan, Turkey and the Gülen Movement," *The Diplomat*, August 21, 2015

As reports from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs show, Turkey's contemporaneous decision to slash trade volumes with Central Asian countries from 2014-2015 indicates Erdoğan's active concern for exerting influence over these countries, including three of the Caspian littoral states.<sup>112</sup> With Gülenism out of the picture in these countries, with Central Asian states increasingly concerned about Islamic extremism, and with the growing role of China and potentially the SCO in regional politics, a resurgence in pan-Turkist foreign policy may yet remain possible.

As Marlene Laruelle suggests, however, the possibility for a resurgence in pan-Turkism remains mitigated by the "Anatolian" nationalism posited by Atatürk after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which sought more to Turkicize minority groups than form alliances with other Turkic peoples. The rapprochement between Turkey and the Soviet Union further mitigated the pan-Turkic phenomenon, and even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Özal's pan-Turkic ambitions began to dissipate as the newly formed Russian state began reasserting its influence in the region.<sup>113</sup> Hence, there exists a correlation between the proximity of Turkish-Russian relations and the prominence of Anatolian Turkish nationalism (which Laruelle dubs a "realist" form of nationalism) at the expense of Turanian (pan-Turkic) nationalism.

---

<sup>112</sup> The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website has economic profiles for each country which has bilateral relations with Turkey. These pages observe a 38% decrease in trade volume between Turkey and Kazakhstan; a 31% decrease between Turkey and Azerbaijan; and a 15% decrease between Turkey and Turkmenistan between 2014-2015, bucking an upward trend over the previous four years. It should be noted that part of the reason for the sharp drop in aid to Azerbaijan after 2014 is the large stimulus of aid from Turkey to Azerbaijan given to combat flare-ups in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. However, even taking this stimulus into consideration, the trend described holds true for Azerbaijan.

<sup>113</sup> Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008, pp. 190-191

This correlation highlights one of the limits of realist analysis for the purposes of US foreign policymaking: where realism prevails, Turkey and Russia draw closer, which means a potential loss of US and Western influence as Erdoğan and Putin take bolder, more critical stances against the Western emphasis on human rights in foreign policy. The development of pipelines and trade routes in the Caspian Sea, from which Turkey stands to benefit as a transit hub, and the continuation of military cooperation with Turkey in the Black Sea can serve as a means of reinforcing the alliance between Turkey and the US. CSIS analyst Boris Toucas observes that Turkey will likely attempt to balance the power of the US and Russia regardless of short-term developments, meaning that additional allocation of funds to military cooperation may yield diminishing returns.<sup>114</sup> However, continued rhetorical, technical, and military support on the part of US leaders for Turkey's territorial integrity in the Black Sea, the long-standing legal regime of the Montreux Convention, and the establishment of trade corridors to supply energy to Europe may assist the US in maintaining soft power in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

### **Vladimir Putin and Russia's Post-Soviet Identity**

If the Erdoğan presidency has been marked by attempts to consolidate state and executive power at the expense of military influence, then Vladimir Putin, as president of Russia, has sought to consolidate this same power at the expense of the oligarchs who came

---

<sup>114</sup> Boris Toucas, "Turkey Has No Allies in the Black Sea, Only Interests," *CSIS Commentary*, February 13, 2018

to power under Yeltsin. Ken Jowitt frames much of the first two terms of Putin's presidency as his attempt to distance himself from his predecessor "attempting to articulate and consolidate a new Russian political identity, not simply enhance and stabilize Russia's state power."<sup>115</sup> To this end, Jowitt observes, Putin's administration has implanted the "consolidation imperatives" of distance and difference from existing identities (such as Yeltsin's openness to Western corporate interests), dominance over subversive identities in times of strength, and defiance in times of disenfranchisement. For Jowitt, the vertical integration of Russia's power structure at the expense of oligarchs and regional leaders, as well as the vulgar, abrasive language used by Putin and his supporters, serves as a means of achieving the primary imperatives of distance and difference in order to lay the framework for a new ideology of state.

To understand Putin's attempts to distance himself from Yeltsin, we must first understand the context from which the desire to drift further away from Yeltsin arose. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin inherited a Russia beset by a power vacuum, leading to what Vladimir Shlapentokh and several later scholars would dub the "feudal model" of Yeltsin-era Russia. Despite Yeltsin's efforts to make Russia more like the victorious Western powers, under this model Russia became "a society plagued by extensive 'privatization' of public power, extreme regionalism, and 'unbearable weakness of the state.'"<sup>116</sup> In this time, groups of Russian oligarchs managed to seize control of

---

<sup>115</sup> Ken Jowitt, "Rus United," in Ronald J. Hill and Ottorino Cappelli, eds., *Putin and Putinism*, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 9

<sup>116</sup> Ottorino Cappelli, "Pre-Modern State-Building in Post-Soviet Russia," in Ronald J. Hill and Ottorino Cappelli, eds., *Putin and Putinism*, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 76

industries previously owned by the state, essentially creating monopolies that led to massive inequalities in the new Russian society.

Jowitt argues that the primary goal of Vladimir Putin's first years in office was to replace the weak feudal state of Yeltsin with a "mercantilist state-nation" in which the state would serve as a strong force for national identity, as opposed to the nation-states typical of the post-Westphalian international system and the regionalism that beset the Yeltsin era. Putin and his advisors and allies also distance and differentiate themselves from the Yeltsin era by rejecting imitation of the West, and indeed speaking highly critically of Western human rights imperatives as a pretension for broader strategic goals. Putin thus has a goal of making the West "increasingly irrelevant" in Russia's sphere of influence.<sup>117</sup> Rather than allowing sectarian, ethnic, and ideological groups to vie for influence, Putin has employed a political strategy of co-opting members of both the far left and the far right under a larger banner, taking advantage of cynicism and postmodern attitudes among the Russian population to create a political tent as large as possible.<sup>118</sup>

As a replacement for the Yeltsin-era oligarchs, a clan of military and intelligence elites known as the *siloviki* began to emerge under Putin. Cappelli defines this clan as being comprised of "people with military-security background, including army and intelligence personnel, leading officials of the law enforcement and power ministries, and managers from the military-industrial complex."<sup>119</sup> The creation of this clan, centralized in the power

---

<sup>117</sup> Jowitt, 12-14

<sup>118</sup> Peter Pomerantsev, "The Hidden Author of Putinism: How Vladislav Surkov Invented the New Russia," *The Atlantic*, November 7, 2014

<sup>119</sup> Cappelli, 83

center of Moscow, aids in the task of restoring center-periphery relations (under the aforementioned paradigm of vertical integration) and establishing what Putin and his advisors refer to as a “managed democracy.” Given this state- and military-centric approach to governance, as well as Russia’s backslide into open anocracy (if not authoritarianism) and Putin’s rejection of Western imitation in favor of reasserting a distinctly Russian sphere of influence, this chapter will analyze the political philosophies of Putin and the *siloviki* to assess the likely actions of Russia with regard to maritime policy.

### **Putin and Neo-Eurasianism**

The recent increase in Russian belligerency in the Crimea and Syria indicates that much like Erdoğan and Davutoğlu’s Turkey, Putin’s Russia has come to define its borders by looking outward to former territories and spheres of influence. Together with Jowitt’s metaphor of Moscow as a “castle” city, Edith Clowes observes a tendency of Russian literature to bemoan Moscow’s status as an isolated city failing to live up to the mantle of the Third Rome.<sup>120</sup> Clowes also observes the tendency of Russian literary minds to understand national identity and culture in terms of space rather than time. Hence, Russian writers engage in discourse of the “center” and the “periphery,” with figures such as V.O. Klyuchevsky lamenting that “[i]n Russia the center is on the periphery.”<sup>121</sup> Although this

---

<sup>120</sup> Edith W. Clowes, *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, p. 42

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 10

spatial understanding of Russian identity contrasts with the time-based “radiant future” discourse of the Soviet era, the spatial identity hearkens back to the wide, expansive geography of the Soviet Union and its former satellites. To this end, Oleg Ilnytski asks the question of “what is Russia without Ukraine”—a question made all the more relevant in the years after Clowes’ book—and Putin refers to the Soviet Union’s collapse as the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century,” lamenting that many Russians found themselves beyond the Russian border.<sup>122</sup>

Here it is important to note Putin’s choice of language in defining who is Russian—he uses the juridical term *rossiiski* rather than the ethnic *russki*. This term connotes a state- and polity-based understanding of identity rather than the ethnic one characterizing the post-Westphalian nation-state system that “does not fit the Russian historical experience,” and aligns more with the “state-nation” concept posited by Hill et al.<sup>123</sup> Here we see that a strong, Machiavellian, vertically integrated state—which Olga Kryshtanovskaya characterizes as an “age-old Russian political tradition”—serves as a marker for a new Russian identity.<sup>124</sup> Viewed in this context, nostalgia for the expansive political power of the Soviet Union, laments of a Russia without Ukraine or the Crimea, and the desire to lift Moscow from its periphery status to the rightful mantle of “third Rome” all serve the view of Russia as a “state-nation” defined by civic belonging rather than ethnicity. Therefore, foreign policy—generally the domain of a strong, federal state rather than local political

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, xii

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, xi; Ken Jowitt, “Rus United,” 14

<sup>124</sup> Jowitt, “Rus United,” 6



entities—plays a crucial role in defining Russia as a “state-nation” rather than a confederation of diverse ethnic groups and local interests.

Any discussion of post-USSR Russian identity and must inevitably address the public intellectual figure that Clowes calls “the main straw man in the debate”: namely, the far-right ideologue Aleksandr Dugin.<sup>125</sup> Although academics such as Clowes and Laruelle acknowledge Dugin as a prolific writer who has exerted some influence over foreign policy as the geopolitics chair for the Duma’s National Security Council, the veracity of Dugin’s claims that he is a “shadow counsellor” to the Putin administration remains difficult to verify.<sup>126</sup> Even other Eurasianists such as Aleksandr Panarin and Edvard Bagramov violently reject the strain of Eurasianism posited by Dugin, who was removed as Moscow State University’s Head of the Department of Sociology of International Relations in 2014 after expressing support for the commission of war crimes against Ukraine.<sup>127</sup> Clowes delineates the many ways in which Dugin differentiates himself from these other Eurasianists, calling attention to the irony that “Eurasia has virtually no voices in Dugin’s world, while the mythic villains of the West have many varied voices,” including the New Right of France and the “heartland-rimland” distinction of English geostrategist Sir Halford Mackinder.<sup>128</sup> Dugin also imagines a Eurasia based on “Iranian-Turkic-Slavic bonding”

---

<sup>125</sup> Clowes, *Russia on the Edge*, xiv

<sup>126</sup> Marlene Laruelle, “Alexandre Dugin: Esquisse d’un eurasisme d’extrême-droite en Russie post-soviétique” (Aleksandr Dugin: Sketch of a far-right Eurasianism in post-Soviet Russia), in *Revue d’études comparatives Est-Ouest* 3, no. 32 (2001), p. 85

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p. 86; *Unian*, “V Rossii sobirayut podpisi za uvolnenie professora MGU, prizvavshego ubivat ukraintsev” (In Russia, signatures collected for the dismissal of Moscow State University professor who called for the killing of Ukrainians), June 15, 2014,

<sup>128</sup> Clowes, *Russia on the Edge*, p. 58

and views the Russian ethnos as the progenitor of Turanism.<sup>129</sup> Whatever the historical merits of this view, and notwithstanding Dugin's rejection of the Western positivist view of history, the previous section on Davutoğlu and neo-Ottomanism indicates that a Russian attempt to establish itself as the standard bearer for pan-Turanism could create significant friction in Turkish-Russian relations. Given the current state of Turkish-Russian relations and the continuation of Southern Gas Corridor development with the Turkic Caspian states, one may question the extent to which Putin is adhering (or has managed to adhere) to this philosophy insofar as it pertains to Turkey.

Yet while the direct influence of Dugin himself may be called into question, there remains an ample body of evidence pointing to Eurasianism's academic influence on the Kremlin and Russian foreign policy. Laruelle notes Putin's explicit overtures to Eurasian thinkers in the past, including invoking one of the philosophy's most seminal progenitors, Turkic world scholar Lev Gumilev, in his speeches.<sup>130</sup> Neo-Eurasianist scholars, many of whom contend that Russia must embrace Islam in order to maintain its sphere of influence, likewise praise Putin's decision to join Islamic conferences and promote the "Asian-ness" of Russia.<sup>131</sup> Whether this phenomenon indicates Putin's affinity for Eurasianism remains open for debate; Pomerantsev reminds us that Putin has sought to build a wide coalition under the banner of his United Russia party.<sup>132</sup> In the context of Putin's speeches to parts of Central Asia such as Tatarstan and Kazakhstan, the latter of which has seen a revitalized

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 51

<sup>130</sup> Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 10

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 7; Laruelle, *Alexandre Dugin*, 90

<sup>132</sup> Pomerantsev, "The Hidden Author of Putinism"

interest in Eurasianism in recent years, this appeal to Gumilev's work may also be seen more as an act of smart diplomacy. However, the presence of Eurasianism in the public discourse suggests a significant level of public and academic impact, and Putin's use of this rhetoric in the "near abroad" signifies a recognition of its value as a diplomatic tool for maintaining Russia's sphere of influence.

Eurasianism also plays a central role in answering the question of whether Russia is a Western country, a Slavic country, or even one influenced by the Mongolic hordes. Leah Greenfeld framed the discourse on Russian identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in terms of Russia's *ressentiment* towards the West, a mixture of envy and hatred formed in response to the reforms of Peter the Great and responsible for the divide between Westernizers and Slavophiles.<sup>133</sup> In a sense, Eurasianism offered an alternative to this dichotomy. Although contemporary thinkers such as Vladimir Solovyov feared that an Asian identity would nurture a barbaric "pan-Mongolism," Eurasianists began to argue for a Russian identity capable of including Asian peoples, albeit under a Christian or "Aryan" banner.<sup>134</sup> The Soviet Union outlawed and condemned Eurasianism as a bourgeois philosophy, but the work of neo-Eurasianists such as Lev Gumilev—a 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkic world scholar—gave rise to the Pamyat movement in the 80s and the publication of numerous Eurasianist journals, magazines and newspapers.<sup>135</sup> For these scholars, Eurasianism betrays a Russian tendency toward synthesis between East and West, a distinctly Hegelian idea that further calls into question the specific influence of Dugin.

---

<sup>133</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, "The Russian National Myth Repudiated," 189

<sup>134</sup> Clowes, *Russia on the Edge*, 13; Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 3

<sup>135</sup> Laruelle, *Alexandre Dugin*, 87

Laruelle attributes to this new wave of scholars a reframing of Russia's relationship with the West and its status as an empire through the lens of Central Asia.<sup>136</sup> Aleksandr Panarin, for instance, conceives of a Russian empire that embodies "moral statehood," recognizes national diversity and rejects nationalism in favor of religiosity, an idea consistent with the concept of state-nation advanced by Putin. Edvard Bagramov likewise draws on the rhetoric of Gumilev to invite increased cooperation between Slavs and Turks. Despite this bold stance, many of these Eurasianists tend to characterize themselves as pragmatic and apolitical, a characterization often applied to Putin himself. In addition to these evident parallels with Putinism and Putin's rhetoric, Laruelle indicates that these brands of Eurasianism have permeated both academia and the military-industrial complex, indicating significant influence over Putin's military elites (the *siloviki*) and thus the decision-making process as a whole.<sup>137</sup>

Thus we see an outward-looking, activist foreign policy not merely as a means of advancing Russian hegemony and interests but as a central pillar of a new Russian state-nation identity largely intertwined with its status as a former empire and controller of territory in Central Asia. The world has recently witnessed the effects of this outward-looking foreign policy in Ukraine and the Crimea, the invasion of which puts Russia in a stronger military position in the Black Sea and, from NATO's perspective, reinforces the necessity of supporting Turkey to maintain a power balance and deter further incursions or even a repeat of the 1946 Turkish Straits crisis. Moreover, a Russian identity guided by

---

<sup>136</sup> Laruelle, *Alexandre Dugin*, 85; Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 3

<sup>137</sup> Laruelle, *Alexandre Dugin*, 88

Eurasianism has resisted and continues to resist the development of Western interests and hegemony in the Caspian basin, including the development of the oil pipelines and transit corridors which Russia has threatened to attack, as outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The integration of disparate ethnic identities within Russian territory into a unified state-nation likewise necessitates efforts to mitigate the rise of Islamist insurgency in Chechnya, Dagestan, and similar disputed Eurasian territories. Clowes shows that this anxiety about the Muslim Caucasus, which she calls the “geographical blind spot of Russia’s new rulers,” has led to public dialogue suppression, media redevelopment, and the return of the Russian secret police force. Here the possibility for anti-terrorism cooperation with Turkey, a nation perpetually anxious about the Kurdish question, becomes relevant as well.

## **Conclusions and Limitations**

As Graham Allison reminds us, the construction of value-maximizing accounts of past developments benefits greatly from hindsight and necessitates background information on history and identity in order to predict how states will act in the future based on their established foreign policy priorities. This chapter has aimed to outline the foreign policy priorities of both Russia and Turkey based on the philosophies guiding each country’s decision makers. Littoral conflict and cooperation between Turkey and Russia in the Black and Caspian betrays more than simply a rational, realist engagement in geopolitics: both states’ actions are guided by their experience as empires and states subject to the designs of other empires. In Turkey, this experience translates into efforts to balance

power between NATO and Russia in order to avoid one side wielding disproportionate influence, as well as a rising current of pan-Turkism buoyed by Turkey's economic interests as a transit hub between Europe and the Turkic Caspian states. Meanwhile, Russia's recent actions in Ukraine and attempts to project power and influence in Central Asia, though perhaps less effectively as of late, indicate an attempt to revitalize Russia's status as a central player in world politics via an outward-looking, activist foreign policy. The discrepancies between the goals of these two states highlight the potential for cooperation with NATO ally Turkey in order to maintain strong relations and avoid a loss of soft power to Russia.

Some authors such as Jowitt have attempted to push back against the narrative common in Western scholarly and popular literature that Russia is inherently an imperialist power, arguing that Putin mainly views war as an instrument of resisting NATO incursion on Russian sovereignty.<sup>138</sup> While the recent events in Ukraine necessitate some degree of caution and skepticism with regard to Russian foreign policy, the clash of insurgents in the Muslim Caucasus with Russian state-nation identity provides an example of instances where either anti-terrorism cooperation may be encouraged or used as a negotiating chip, or the US and its allies might encourage conflict in a similar vein to Russian support for Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh.

---

<sup>138</sup> Jowitt, "Rus United," 29. For an example of Western authors viewing Russia as imperialist, one can look at Steve Levine's *The Oil and the Glory*, a book which paradoxically asserts that Western oil companies operating halfway around the world in Russia's backyard had to contend with "Russian imperialism."

## **Conclusion**

As Erdogan's Turkey moves closer to Russia both in terms of political autocracy and rhetorical opposition to Western and European human rights concerns, an evaluation of the ideal strategy for maintaining strong relations with Turkey and promoting American interests in the West necessitates a re-evaluation of our political philosophy and priorities in the region. What the US and Western scholars term "realism" prevails in Turkish-Russian relations when Turkey's leadership espouses an Anatolian nationalism that rejects pan-Turanian idealism in favor of maintaining strong relations with Russia, a situation currently borne out in the growing rapprochement between Russia and Turkey despite numerous incidents. As both countries experience backslides on democracy and critique Western meddling in their domestic affairs, their leaders become natural allies whose regimes depend on strong nationalist and militarist leadership and the pursuit of self-definition in relation to Europe. Thus, the application of a pure realist lens to US involvement in Turkish-Russian relations ends inevitably with the loss of US soft power as the mutual interests of Turkey and Russia, who also benefit mutually from a high trade volume, draw the two countries closer together. The national identities of Turkey and Russia, informed by the imperial history of both countries and the Presidential and military power structures developed therein, can inform Western analysts in turn of the potential areas of conflict between the two and aid in the maintenance and expansion of current alliances.

Historically, contestation over the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits has posed one of the greatest roadblocks to Turkish-Russian relations, whether imperial or present-day. The historical experience of Russia aiming to annex the Turkish Straits, whether under the rules of Peter and Catherine the Great in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries or under Stalin after World War II, makes the Straits system one of the region's critical "chokepoints," in Ahmet Davutoglu's parlance. This area also remains one of the most crucial regions of military cooperation for NATO, a cooperation promoted by Ankara as a means of mitigating Russia's influence over the Straits system. Indeed, as Russia continues the naval buildup in the Black Sea undertaken after the 2014 annexation of Crimea, the capacity of Turkey to continue its defense of the Turkish Straits in accordance with the 1936 Montreux Convention may rely on the intervention of its allies, including NATO. Boris Toucas contends that Turkey views NATO with increasing suspicion and faces Russian pressure to keep non-regional actors out of the Black Sea. However, as shown in Chapter 3 and likewise observed by Toucas, the neo-Ottoman philosophy undergirding the Erdogan administration's decision-making process will likely lead to pursuit of power balance in the region as was the case in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, leaving a window for NATO and US involvement and cooperation open.<sup>139</sup>

Meanwhile, Turkey's involvement in the Caspian Sea through Azerbaijan provides the country with an opportunity to continue transforming itself into an important gas hub for Western countries, which could provoke a severe backlash in Russia. Already the recent

---

<sup>139</sup> Boris Toucas, "Turkey Has No Allies in the Black Sea, Only Interests," *CSIS Commentary*, February 13, 2018



rapprochement between Turkey and Russia has entailed the completion of the Blue Stream pipeline and the resumption of the TurkStream pipeline, to be completed in 2019. This emphasis, as well as Russian threats against the Turkmen Trans-Caspian Pipeline, demonstrate the relevance of these transit corridors to Russian interests and the potential of existing transit corridors to draw Turkey closer into the NATO orbit.<sup>140</sup> A renewed Turkish interest in Central Asia and Turkic Caspian states in particular leaves open the possibility of increased friction with Russia, which has considered these states within its sphere of influence. Continued support for projects undertaken between Turkey and other Turkic Caspian states, whether energy-related or otherwise can serve as an avenue to maintain strong ties between Turkey and the West. Moreover, the rising prominence of China and the One Belt One Road project, while beyond the scope of this thesis, may alter the geopolitical layout of the Caspian region even further.

It should be noted that the primary objective of this thesis is to analyze the possible steps that the US government can take in response to the growing rapprochement between Turkey and Russia based on an analysis of the two countries' naval and imperial histories and the development of their littoral legal regimes. The philosophical question of the extent to which the US should consider foreign policy involvement in the Caucasus and Central Asia a top priority remains highly relevant, especially considering President Trump's rhetoric on whether allies are paying their fair share and critiques of opposition figures such as Bernie Sanders over US involvement in the Saudi-led proxy war in Yemen.<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Although toned down from Trump's campaign trail rhetoric, an allusion to the question of whether US allies are paying their fair share militarily can be found in the Trump Administration's National Security

Certainly the current administration remains friendly to military interests and, backed even by Democrats in the Senate, has pushed for an increase in military spending to \$716 billion per year.<sup>142</sup> However, to whatever extent one considers this status quo desirable, the potential for subsequent administrations to reduce the military budget remains present and must be accounted for in any responsible military strategy.

Bearing this in mind, in making recommendations on potential military and diplomatic actions to take with regard to Turkish-Russian relations, this analysis has sought to qualify its recommendations with the caveat that smarter spending, as opposed to more spending, will be the ideal solution. Turkey, a country whose foreign policy has been shaped by the experience of Ottoman power balancing and attempts by European powers to gain control or influence over the Turkish Straits, is likely to view US and NATO interests in the Black and Caspian Seas with as much suspicion as Russian interests. Actions such as the Turkish purchase of a Russian missile defense system in 2017 may necessitate similar increases in material military support, but neo-Ottoman skepticism of foreign powers will lead to diminishing returns for expensive military gestures.<sup>143</sup> Renewals of present rhetorical commitments to support for Turkey in the Black and Caspian Seas may prove more efficient in the long run.

---

Strategy, released December 2017 and available at the White House website. Sanders' rhetoric on US-support for the Saudi-led bombing of Yemen can be seen in the Sanders Statement on Yemen Resolution Vote on March 20, 2018, which can be found on Sanders' official website.

<sup>142</sup> Mike Eckel, "Trump Signs \$700 Billion Military Budget Into Law, Urges Congress To Fund It," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, December 12, 2017.

<sup>143</sup> Murat Yetkin, "Turkey buys Russian missiles thanks to the US," *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 29, 2017

The rise of Donald Trump, the emboldening of Erdoğan after the April 2017 referendum, and the cynical vulgarity of Putin have all contributed to a media culture of extreme rhetoric in recent years, which on the surface threatens to unravel the alliances formed during and after the Cold War. Yet behind the aggressive posturing of today's world leaders, the foreign policymaking process in Turkey and Russia remains largely guided by the same geopolitical calculus employed over the past 20 years. Even the Trump administration has not departed radically from previous administrations, largely due to the bureaucratic decision-making structure and constitutional checks on Presidential power in the US, though whether Trump's recent replacements of Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State and Henry McMaster as National Security Advisor will alter this paradigm remains to be seen.<sup>144</sup> A responsible strategy for engaging Turkey, Russia, and the broader Caucasus and Central Asia region necessitates an ability to see past inflamed rhetoric and understand the historical and geopolitical dynamics that inform foreign policy and decision making. As much of an upheaval as the recent Turkish-Russian rapprochement and Turkish distancing from Europe may appear on the surface, the core dynamics of the region remain largely unchanged, and avenues remain wide open for the US to maintain and expand its soft power into the Caucasus and Central Asia.

---

<sup>144</sup> In the journalistic world, Jonathan Marcus demonstrates the similarities of Trump's national security strategy with that of past administrations in his December 18, 2017 *BBC News* article "Trump's National Security Strategy: A pragmatic view of troubled world." One can likewise confirm this claim by analyzing the strategy itself and the ways in which it lines up with current American policies. Though Trump's policies on free trade align with the "America First" doctrine and rejection of transnational citizenship outlined in this document, his declared aversion to nation-building efforts such as the Iraq War clashes with continued American engagement in the bombing campaigns begun by Obama, with bipartisan support, in Syria and Yemen. Other Trump policies are distinct from Obama's but have precedent among neoconservative voices in Congress, such as a rhetorical (if yet unrealized) commitment to repealing the Iran nuclear deal and moving the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

## Bibliography

*Al Jazeera*. "Timeline: A history of Turkish coups." July 15, 2016.

Aliriza, Bulent. "Turkey and the Crisis in the Caucasus." *CSIS Commentary*, September 9, 2008.

Allison, Graham and Philip Zelikow. *Essence Of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. London: Longman, 1999.

Aydın, Mustafa. "Oil, Pipelines and Security: The Geo-Politics of the Caspian Region." *The Caspian Region: A Re-Emerging Region, Volume I*, ed. Moshe Gammer. London: Routledge, 2004. pp. 9-30

*BBC Azerbaijani*, "Bakı: Transxəzər nəqliyyat layihəsinin tədbirlər planı imzalanıb" [Baku: Agreement on Trans-Caspian Pipeline blueprint signed], April 1, 2017.

*BBC News*. "Turkey referendum: Erdogan hails 'clear' win in vote on new powers." April 16, 2017.

*BBC News*. "Turkey's coup attempt: What you need to know." July 17, 2016.

*BBC News*. "Turkey's Erdogan calls Dutch authorities 'Nazi remnants.'" March 11, 2017.

*Bernie Sanders, US Senator for Vermont*. "Sanders Statement on Yemen Resolution Vote." March 20, 2018. <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sanders-statement-on-yemen-resolution-vote>

Bhadrakumar, M.K. "Russia and Turkey tango in the Black Sea." *Asia Times Online*, September 12, 2008.

*Birgun*. "Anayasa teklifi değişti: 21 maddeden ikisi iptal" (Constitutional proposal changes: two of 21 articles removed). December 28, 2017.

Bobroff, Ronald Park. *Late Imperial Russia and the Turkish Straits: Roads to Glory*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2006.

Brletich, Samantha. "Tajikistan, Turkey and the Gülen Movement." *The Diplomat*. August 21, 2015.

Cappelli, Ottorino. "Pre-Modern State-Building in Post-Soviet Russia." *Putin and Putinism*, ed. Ronald J. Hill and Ottorino Cappelli. London: Routledge, 2010. pp. 61-102

Clowes, Edith W. *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Cornell, Svante E. and S. Frederick Starr. *The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West*. Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, 2005.

Davutoğlu, Ahmet. *Stratejik Derinlik* [Strategic Depth]. Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001.

Dekmejian, R. Hrair and Hovann H. Simonian, *Troubled Waters: The Geopolitics of the Caspian Region*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2003.

Dettoni, Jacopo. "Russia and Iran Lock NATO Out of Caspian Sea," *The Diplomat*. October 1, 2014.

Diba, Bahman. *The Law and Politics of the Caspian Sea in the 21st Century*. Bethesda: IBEX Publishers, 2003.

Diba, Bahman Aghai. "Russian-Azerbaijan Agreement in the Caspian Sea: What Does It Mean for Iran?" *Payvand News Agency*, October 17, 2002.

Eckel, Mike. "Trump Signs \$700 Billion Military Budget Into Law, Urges Congress To Fund It." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, December 12, 2017.

Elman, Colin. "Horses for Courses: Why not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy." *Security Studies*, Vol. 6(1), 1996. pp. 7-53

*Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Treaty of Çanak," Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998. Accessed April 29, 2017.

*Freedom House*. "Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis." DOA March 17, 2018.

Girgin, Kemal. *Ruslarla Kavgadan-Derin Ortaklığa (Son Yüz Senemiz: 1914-2014)* [From Conflict to Cooperation with the Russians (The Last Hundred Years: 1914-2014)]. Istanbul: İlgi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2014.

Hale, William. *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774, Third Edition*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Hasanlı, Jamil. *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis of the Cold War, 1945-1953*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011.

Hermann, Margaret G. and Charles F. "Who makes foreign policy decisions and how: An empirical inquiry." *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no.4, 1989. pp. 361-387

Hosking, Geoffrey. "The Russian National Myth Repudiated," in *Myths and Nationhood*, ed. George Schopflin and Geoffrey Hosking. London: Routledge, 1997. pp. 198-210

Janusz-Pawletta, Barbara. *The Legal Status of the Caspian Sea: Current Challenges and Prospects for Future Development*. Berlin: Springer, 2015.

Jelavich, Barbara. *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870-1887*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.

Jowitt, Ken. "Rus United." *Putin and Putinism*, ed. Ronald J. Hill and Ottorino Cappelli. London: Routledge, 2010, p. 9-40

Karsh, Efraim and Inari. *Empires of the Sand: the Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789-1923*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. pp. 11-12

Köşebalaban, Hasan. *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

Kucera, Joshua. "The Great Caspian Arms Race." *Foreign Policy*, June 22, 2012.

Kuchins, Andrew C. and Jeffrey Mankoff. "Turkey, Russia, and Iran in the Caucasus," in *The Turkey, Russia, Iran Nexus: Evolving Power Dynamics in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia*, ed. Samuel J. Brannen. Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013.

Laruelle, Marlene. "Alexandre Dugin: Esquisse d'un euramisme d'extreme-droite en Russie post-sovietique" (Aleksandr Dugin: Sketch of a far-right Eurasianism in post-Soviet Russia). *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 3, no. 32, 2001. pp. 85-103

Laruelle, Marlene. *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Lukic, Rénéo and Michael Brint, eds. *Culture, politics, and nationalism in the age of globalization*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2001.

MacFie, A.L. "The Straits Question in the First World War, 1914-1918." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 19, January 1983. pp. 43-74.

Mankoff, Jeremy. "Russia and Turkey's Rapprochement." *Foreign Affairs*, July 20, 2016.

Marcus, Jonathan. "Trump's National Security Strategy: A pragmatic view of troubled world." *BBC News*. December 18, 2017.

Migdalovitz, Carol. "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and US Views." *Congressional Research Service*, November 28, 2010. p. 39

Mikaberidze, Alexander, ed. "Treaty of Constantinople (1700)" in *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia, Vol. 1*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011. p. 250

Murinson, Alexander. "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 42, no. 6, November 2006. pp. 945-964

Nəsibov, Elşən. *ABŞ və Türkiyənin Qafqaz Geosiyasi Regionunda Strateji Maraqları və Azərbaycan Respublikası* (The US and Turkey's Strategic Interests in the Caucasus and the Republic of Azerbaijan). Baku: Çıraq, 2006

Oran, Baskın. *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919-2006: Facts and Analyses with Documents*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2010.

Oreshkova, S.F. and N.Y. Ulchenko, *Rossiya i Turtsiya: Problemy Formirovaniya Granits* [Russia and Turkey: Problems of Border Formation], Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences Oriental Institute, 1999.

Özkaleli, Ferit Murat and Umut Konoloğlu. "The Myth and the Reality about Turkish Model-Democratization in the Muslim World." *American Political Science Association*, 2003.

*Payvand News Agency*. "Iran's Changing Perspectives & Policies on the Caspian Sea: Interview with Abbas Maleki." March 22, 2001.

Pomerantsev, Peter. "The Hidden Author of Putinism: How Vladislav Surkov Invented the New Russia." *The Atlantic*. November 7, 2014.

Putz, Catherine. "Turkish Targeting of Gülen Movement Reaches into Central Asia." *The Diplomat*. July 25, 2016.

Putz, Catherine. "Yes, Kazakhstan Has a Navy." *The Diplomat*. April 14, 2015.

Rivlin, Paul. "Oil and Gas in the Economies of the Caspian Region." *The Caspian Region: A Re-Emerging Region, Volume I*, ed. Moshe Gammer. London: Routledge, 2004. p. 32-42

Rozakis, Christos and Petros Stagos. "The Turkish Straits," in *International Straits of the World*, ed. Gerard J. Mangone. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987.

Sagheb, Nasser and Masoud Javadi. "Azerbaijan's 'Contract of the Century' Finally Signed with Western Oil Consortium." *Azerbaijan International*, Winter 1994. pp. 26-28, 65

Sotiriou, Stylianos A. *Russian Energy Strategy in the European Union, the Former Soviet Union Region, and China*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015.

*Systemic Peace*. "Polity IV Annual Time Series, 1800-2016." DOA March 17, 2018.

Thomas, Timothy L. "Russian National Interests and the Caspian Sea." *Perceptions*, vol. 4, no. 4, December 1999-February 2000. pp. 75-96

Toucas, Boris. "Turkey Has No Allies in the Black Sea, Only Interests." *CSIS Commentary*. February 13, 2018.

*Turkish Bar Union*. "Anayasa Değişikliği Teklifi'nin Karşılaştırmalı ve Açıklamalı Metni" (Text of Proposed Constitutional Changes with Comparison and Explanation). DOA March 17, 2018.

*Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. "Azerbaycan'ın Ekonomisi" (Azerbaijan's Economy). DOA March 22, 2018. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/azerbaycan-ekonomisi.tr.mfa>

*Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. "Kazakistan'ın Ekonomisi" (Kazakhstan's Economy). DOA March 22, 2018. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/kazakistan-cumhuriyeti-ekonomisi.tr.mfa>

*Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. "Türkmenistan'ın Ekonomisi" (Turkmenistan's Economy). DOA March 22, 2018. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkmenistan-ekonomisi.tr.mfa>

*Unian*. "V Rossii sobirayut podpisi za uvolnenie professora MGU, prizvavshego ubivat ukraintsev" (In Russia, signatures collected for the dismissal of Moscow State University professor who called for the killing of Ukrainians). June 15, 2014.

Ünlü, Nihan. "The Legal Regime of the Turkish Straits," in *International Straits of the World*, ed. Gerard J. Mangone. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2002.

Váli, Ferenc A. *The Turkish Straits and NATO*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972.

Valiyev, Javid. "Foreign Policy of Azerbaijan in 25 Years of Independence: Priorities, Principles and Achievements." *Caucasus International*, vol. 7, no. 1, Summer 2017. pp. 29-47

Vicari, Madalina Susu. "The Southern Gas Corridor and Turkey." *Enerji Diplomasisi*, eds. Hasret Çomak, Caner Sancaktar, and Zafer Yıldırım. Istanbul: Beta Basım Yayım Dağıtım A.Ş., 2015. pp. 517-537



*The White House*. “National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” December 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

Yetkin, Murat. “Turkey buys Russian missiles thanks to the US.” *Hürriyet Daily News*. December 29, 2017